

A STUDY IN WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH
USING PSYCHO-IMAGERY TECHNIQUES

A Dissertation
Presented To
The Faculty Of The School of Theology
At Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For The Degree
Doctor Of Philosophy

by
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May, 1987

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Abstract

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The issues of idolatry are central to this dissertation. On the one hand, there has been a strong tendency to reduce and fixate symbols for God. These few symbols become equivalent to God, instead of pointing beyond themselves to the divine reality, and are themselves worshipped. On the other hand, the attempted correctives to this idolatry often result in an idolatry of human experience. Those things which enhance personal self-worth become defined as holy, and worshipped. The first idolatry is irrelevant and oppressive to those not included in the symbols (primarily women), and the second idolatry is isolating. Both have created false gods.

These issues are central in the practice of pastoral counseling. People in crisis tend to seek spiritual resources. Yet often the familiar religious supports are found to be only temporarily useful, images which comfort but do not move through the transition into new life choices. Without a dynamic understanding, God and spirituality are often put back into the closet until the next crisis. Sometimes, through this kind of experience, self-knowledge becomes the goal and is set up as divine. The idolatry of personal experience, even called spiritual experience, is substituted for the idolatry of a fixed God symbol.

How can these issues be addressed in pastoral counseling? Within a theological commitment to the reality of a dynamic God, expressed throughout the traditions and the Scriptures and expressed still in everyday life, the use of psychoimagination work is a promising, integrative approach to spiritual/personal growth. Imagination work, particularly within a group setting, allows for the integration of all past images with ongoing image making. The group becomes a communal corrective to, while affirming the importance of, personal and shared experience. Within a meditative setting, the search for God and self becomes a worshipful experience and worship becomes the grounding and the integrative force of the pastoral counseling.

The project reported in the following pages operationalizes and measures these theological and psychological precepts for pastoral counseling. The results indicate the successful nature of such an approach.

Acknowledgements

This work could never have been accomplished without the guidance, support, and encouragement of a great many people. First, the doctoral program at the School of Theology at Claremont is a well-thought out educational experience bringing together theory and practice in challenging ways. I have appreciated that approach. I would like to particularly acknowledge the sensitive and helpful instruction of my guidance committee, Dan Rhoades, Allen Moore, and Howard Clinebell. I wish to extend a special thank you to Howard Clinebell for his wise teaching, his steadfast encouragement, and his open friendship. He has been a mentor for me.

I would also like to thank my student colleagues in the Ph.D. program. The many hours in which we shared our thoughts, critiquing and encouraging one another, were central to my educational experience at STC. I am particularly grateful to Judy Orr and Rick Bates in their challenges and their friendship.

My appreciation also goes to United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities where I received my Master of Divinity degree. Throughout my doctoral program I was unceasingly grateful for the preparation I had received there. They taught me to think integratively in ways that enhanced both knowledge and creativity. The institution and the people in it are unique.

In terms of this specific project, I would like to thank the fifteen women who gave their time and their efforts to the group

experience of spiritual growth. We learned together. My thanks, also, to Oxford University Press who graciously gave permission for me to use and reprint the Religious Orientation Survey developed by C. Daniel Batson and W. Larry Ventis.

Finally, I want to thank my family. My children, Dan and Cathy, were extraordinarily tolerant, understanding, and supportive throughout the entire educational experience. I appreciate them deeply. And, my most profound thanks go to my husband, and friend, Win, who read every page, proofreading and offering constructive comments. He encouraged me in every conceivable way and I am very grateful for that.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Modern humanity is in a theological crisis. The spiritual experience of one half of its numbers has been, to a large degree, left out. The spiritual experience of those that have been counted, primarily white males, has been concretized and literalized in ways that destroy its symbolic value. The irrelevancy and idolatry (as Sallie McFague describes it) has left the contemporary person with few meaningful resources with which to reach out toward the divine reality. Churches are losing membership. Many women are abandoning the tradition in its entirety out of feelings of betrayal and irrelevance. Many of those who stay in church end up separating their "Sunday" lives from their lives during the rest of the week. The world is in significant trouble from too much technology with too little meaning and we are unable to fully marshal our theological resources because they do not reflect the depths of our experiences. We need a new vision and, often, we don't know how to go about seeking it. We're not sure we would even recognize it if it came along.

Purpose

The particular purpose of this study is to look at new possibilities for enhancing women's spiritual growth in this time of theological challenge and hope. The vehicles for this search include

feminist theology, feminist psychology, and imagery psychotherapy. It is based in the belief that we have allowed our primary symbols for God (and for ourselves) to lose their metaphorical power. We have literalized symbolic images that have no meaning without their symbolic character. And, because we have literalized symbols, there has been no room for ongoing symbol-making out of our relevant experience.

The purpose of this study is also to demonstrate that each of us can and must take responsibility for our spirituality. We must find symbols and metaphors that emerge out of our experience and serve as vehicles for connection with the divine reality. But those symbols cannot stand in experience alone. They must also be grounded in our traditions--the history of people who have quested after God from the beginning of time. This is difficult. It is easy to see the tradition itself as oppressive to women and therefore without meaning in their connection with God. But, the deeper meaning of our tradition, the recurring themes of personal relationship with a caring God, of prophetic voices calling down the cultural idols, of a savior who took the part of those who were oppressed, these have meaning when they can be formulated in images and symbols which speak to our contemporary situation. When the tradition is expressed in symbols which perpetuate oppression in any form, those symbols must be evaluated and potentially eliminated. The work of the study demonstrates the feasibility and effectiveness of women working to integrate their traditions with new and liberating spiritual symbols.

It seems as if we need a means to integrate the richness of our liberating tradition with women's (and men's) experience in ways that

allow the formation of a new symbol system. Another purpose of this study is to show that the use of imagery has the potential to do this. The image, as it is defined below and as it is explored in chapter four, is an internal experience which integrates perception, feeling, and meaning into a new whole. When images are induced through spiritual guidance or psychotherapy, the potential to do the integrative work needed to make ongoing spirituality both grounded in tradition and transformed through creativity is enhanced. The use of imagination unleashes the creative, integrative power within each person to find out what symbols open her or him up to more meaningful connection with God relevant to ongoing life concerns.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis of this study was that the imagery and meditation techniques used in the group process would enhance the searching or questing dimension of religious orientation without affecting the other two dimensions. It was grounded in the assumption that women need to have a greater degree of quest in their religious orientations in order to make meaning out of a tradition which is oppressive to them. The quest orientation indicates an ongoing dialogue between life experience and religion with a willingness to raise and live with questions instead of needing to have fixed answers.

A second hypothesis was that during this study which uses psycho-imagination techniques as a means to explore spirituality, women would develop new images for God and the capacity to create ongoing God images as they needed them. This change in God imagery was measured more subjectively, primarily through self-report. Women were asked,

prior to the group experience, how they imagined or understood God. Then, as the group experience progressed, their descriptions of God throughout the imagery exercises were noted. Finally, in their final evaluations, they again responded to how they understood God. These self-reports were designed to assess the change in forming images of God over the group process.

Definition of Terms

It is important, before going on, to define some terms which are important to the development of this project. As much of the work is based on the use of the image, both in theological and psychological terms, it is important to define that concept. First of all, an image is not a mental picture. We will explore this more in chapter four because the concept of image has often been used interchangeably with that of a mental picture. Instead we will define the image in three ways. First, an image is a reality which integrates thought, feeling, and meaning inside oneself and in the social context. Second, an image is the primary vehicle within private and public symbols and metaphors, even motivating symbolic articulation. And, third, the symbol is an experiential reality. Images can function as a part of one's memory, as a way of making sense out of one's present, and as a way to project into the future. All of these elements of images will be analyzed and expanded in chapter four. It is important to say at this point, though, that images do not have to be conscious or articulated, either in oneself or in the consciousness of the culture, for these dimensions of the image to function. As Nelle Morton says,

Images can work subliminally in such a way that people can deny their intent and their existence. Images are created in words, repetitive events, ritualistic ceremonies of etiquette, hidden visual representations, structures that delude because of their invisibility so that all of us tend to be manipulated by them and their power in spite of our knowledge of their existence.¹

Morton is talking, at this point, about images that have been formed out of our patriarchal culture with its attendant sexist structures and values. For the sake of clarity, though, it is important to add that images can function as a means to break out of destructive feelings/thoughts/behavior as well. A new image which reorganizes and reintegrates in a different way can refocus an individual's (or a society's) energies toward different interpretations and behavior. Although conflicting images can live side by side, it is in bringing images to consciousness that choices can be made about which images are truly valuable. This is again true at both the personal and the communal level.

A symbol, in the way it will be used here, is a meaningful, articulated image. It, like the image, participates in the reality for which it stands. As it represents a reality, it also impacts on that reality. Because symbols are meaningful (at some level) and are articulated (at some level), it is more difficult for symbols that conflict to exist together.

¹ Nelle Morton, The Journey Is Home (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 109.

Finally, the notion of a metaphor also needs to be defined. A metaphor is a vehicle through which to compare one image to another. However, in a metaphor, as contrasted with an analogue, there is both the similarity and the dissimilarity implied in the comparison. As Sallie McFague says, "One critical difference between symbolic and metaphorical is that the latter always contains the whisper, 'it is and it is not.' A metaphorical perspective does see connections, but they are of a tensive, discontinuous and surprising nature."²

In fact, McFague feels that the more dissimilarity there is--the more shocking that the metaphor can be--then the more effective it is. When a metaphor is shocking in its dissimilarity, one says an instinctive "no" to it. And that "no" forces one to look closely to see the similarities. As Allen Paivio, an experimental psychologist in the field of imagery, says, "Metaphor is a solar eclipse. It both enlightens and obscures. Metaphors block out the central stuff so that you can see the subtle stuff better."³

Background Material

The study which is reported in the following pages finds itself rooted in this contemporary crisis. It is particularly concerned with the reality that women have only a scattered recorded religious history.

² Sallie McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 13.

³ Peter McKeellar, "Imagery and the Unconscious," in Theories of Image Formation, ed. David F. Marks (New York: Brandon House, 1986) p. 48.

This is true in the sense that the historical experience of women in their religious quests has been minimally recorded and not taken seriously. Consequently, this study focusses on women's experience as foundational to re-energizing the theological enterprise. And, it is also grounded in the belief that theology, as ongoing reflection about God, humanity, and creation, needs new energy. Behind this study there is an assumption, which is discussed in detail in chapter two, that we have tried to "domesticate" the divine reality--a reality which can only be approached and not grasped--by turning symbols into "truths." This truth building has turned God into a possession, usually God our Father, which deadens us to the richness of the God who is beyond our knowing but who participates with us in our lives. Symbols which used to point dramatically beyond themselves when they were new, have become the reality. Unfortunately, new symbols for God and humanity which would give us fresh vehicles through which to approach our lives have not been emerging in the culture. We instead have tried to talk ourselves into believing that the old symbols (which are no longer really symbols) are still relevant. However, with the work over the past fifteen years, primarily through the work of feminist theologians, new symbols and, more importantly, new ways of symbol-making, are beginning to emerge.

Women have been in particular trouble in this crisis, and still are, despite the new and exciting work being done. They are in trouble because these symbols, even though they no longer have vitality, are still foundational to the religious institutions. And those symbols do not, and have never, taken women's experience and women's needs, seriously. Women have very little with which to make sense of God and

the world except their current experience, which the culture has told them not to take seriously and never to trust.

Many feminist theologians feel that women are in the best possible position to be the authors of new symbols. There are at least two reasons why this is so. Dorothy Soelle represents one of those when she says,

The deciding factor is the way we imagine God. Our God-talk, our way of symbolizing God, must change if we take our claim of liberation seriously and try to live it. This is connected with the powerlessness in which we experience ourselves and which is religiously transfigured and elevated. Our own power is destroyed when God is imagined as the mighty or even the omnipotent Father. This symbol includes two components: one is might, omnipotence, so the Father is power, lord over life and death, holder of all economic, moral and political power. Secondly, the father represents goodness. These two components resonate in the father-image and make it such a powerful and significant symbol. As a woman, I'd simply like to ask why people honor a God whose most important quality is power, whose interest is subjection, whose fear is equality?⁴

The second reason is typified in an article by Carol Christ who says,

Let me simply state that women who have been deprived of a female religious symbol system for centuries are therefore in an excellent position to recognize the power and primacy of symbols. I believe women must develop a theory of symbol and theology congruent with their experience at the same time they "remember and invent" new symbol systems.⁵

4 Dorothee Soelle, "A Feminist Reflection: Mysticism, Liberation, and the Names of God," Christianity and Crisis, 41, no. 11 (22 June 1981): 182.

5 Carol Christ, "Why Women Need The Goddess," in WomanSpirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 279.

Women who recognize their oppression in the culture are highly motivated to allow their creativity to produce new symbols which help them to express their spiritual needs and hopes. As these two authors point out, women are first motivated by the fact of their oppression. An oppressive symbol cannot participate in their liberation. In addition, they are also motivated because they understand how powerful symbols can be and know that new symbols can be important vehicles to God. Particularly when women are able to overcome their distrust of one another, they can find, in community, the means to validate their own and each other's experience so that it can become a part of the new symbol-making. When women's experience is taken seriously, first by themselves and then by the culture at large, it offers a critical resource for re-energizing and enlivening personal and communal spirituality. The tendency in the culture has been to denigrate women's experience, calling women's strengths their inferiorities. The immense power of emotions, intuition, relationality, and other stereotypically women's qualities, has been diminished in favor of facts, data, logic, and autonomy. The clear need of the society at this point in time is for an acknowledgment of our essential relatedness and the feelings and responsibilities that go with that. As women work to create new metaphors and symbols for God, for the relationship between God and the world, and for the relationships between people, those dynamics will emerge as valuable to us all.

Women learning to take themselves seriously and then working to be taken seriously in the culture is a slow process. The society still finds ways to punish women for being "above" themselves. However, as

women find themselves in one another, their power over themselves is strengthened.

It is important to emphasize that there is powerful work being done by feminist theologians, at this point in time, which is beginning to have an important impact on the field of theology as a whole. The work of women such as Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Letty Russell, Sallie McFague, Carol Christ, and many others, has clearly defined these theological problems and provided heuristic methodologies for addressing them. However, the impact of this work on women, in and out of the churches, who look for resources for their day to day spiritual lives, is small and slow in gaining impetus. This is my primary concern in doing this study.

The issues in women's psychology parallel those of theology. The psychology of women has been primarily created by males, using male values and theory, with males serving as experimental subjects and as the theory builders. Consequently, women's first-hand experience has been set aside in favor of normative male experience and women's deviation from that. This has left us with a psychology of women which, not only does not fit, but which distorts and is harmful to women. This psychology of women has been primarily grounded in women's biology, especially in their reproductive differences, and their place in society, and value to society, has been evaluated with that standard. The consequences to women (which include low self-esteem, lost contributions to the culture, loneliness, and vulnerability), have been enormous. Women's psychology is now emerging out of the theory-building of women who are exploring women's experience first-hand through new

methods. This work is not only an important critique and corrective to the psychology of women which has gone before, but it is crucial to changing the oppressive dynamics of the society. That work is providing new psychologies of women which do not ignore the differences between men and women, but which look at both the similarities and the differences within their life experiences. Again, however, movement from theory to practice, from psychological research to the practice of psychotherapy and to women's self-understanding, is slow and sketchy. This, again, is my concern in this project.

The work being done by both feminist theologians and psychologists offers us a new vision and new hope. Their contributions enrich the society as a whole. No society can flourish in any real way when the experience of one half of its population is ignored. The change is slow, with frightened reactions and backlash, but it has begun and cannot be stopped.

Scope and Limitations Of This Study

This study is grounded, not only in the context of the contemporary crisis, but also in the anticipation of this new vision. Hopefully, this work adds to the vision in some way, as the work of all women who are seeking new questions and new answers to the problems of our relationships with one another, with God, and with ourselves, must.

This project seeks to contribute to the vision through an investigation into women's spiritual growth, and, by drawing implications from that process applicable to the field of pastoral counseling and to the Church. Based on the foundational issues and resources in theology, women's psychology, and imagery psychotherapy, I

developed a group process intended to enhance both the ability to search for questions and possibilities within one's spiritual life and the ability to connect to the divine reality through a variety of symbolic images for God. The assumptions behind the study include the conviction that women need to be able to raise questions and challenges to a traditional religion which historically has not had their best interests at heart. They need to be more searching and dynamic in their spiritual lives in order to find the directions in their faith lives which most enhances their authentic spiritual growth.

Another assumption is that the use of imagery psychotherapy is a rich resource for pastoral counseling and spiritual direction because of both the creative and the integrative potential of psycho-imagery. Any new image contains past history as well as novelty in its formation. Because of this, imagery is a highly appropriate tool in helping women and men to engage in spiritual growth without radical separation from personal or religious history. This will be more fully developed in chapter four.

The group process of twelve total hours involved women learning through a variety of imagery techniques and exercises to progressively incorporate an ongoing, imagery-creating dynamic in their spiritual lives. Fifteen women participated in the three separate group formats. They all displayed an interest in enhancing their spiritual lives, although with differing levels of intensity, and they all felt themselves to be in either a spiritual or a life transition.

By using an instrument to measure the pre-group and post-group levels of "quest" in the participants' religious orientations and,

through an intensive interview and a final evaluation, their pre-group and post-group understandings of, and relationships to, God, I was able to get a sense of the effectiveness of this particular method of facilitating spiritual growth in women. The final evaluation was also important in rating the helpfulness of the project. However, probably the most important clues to the value of this approach came through the comments and experiences of the women throughout the twelve-hour group experience itself. Some of these experiences are reported through case vignettes in chapter six.

The scope of this study was to develop and test whether or not this particular process of group psycho-imagination work enhanced women's questing orientation to religion and helped them to develop a way to use their own imagery resources in relating to God. Measurements were developed to assess the success of those goals.

The limitations of the study are several. There were only fifteen women involved in three twelve hour groups. This small number of participants offers only suggestive conclusions. Consequently, one major limitation of the study is sample size.

A second limitation is that of long-term follow-up. The project measured change over a relatively short period of time and, although there has been some informal follow-up in the succeeding six months, the study does not attempt to demonstrate that spiritual growth continued after the end of the group experience in the same ways it occurred during the group.

A third limitation of this study is that it does not claim to demonstrate that this process is either the only way to enhance

spiritual growth in women, or, necessarily the best way. It does attempt to develop an effective method based on the important resource of psycho-imagery work and on scholarship regarding spiritual growth.

Finally, a fourth limitation to this project is that it works primarily with God imagery as a central dimension of spirituality and not with other aspects of women's spiritual concerns.

The need for women (and for men) to learn to engage in theological reflection and symbol-building is critical in an age when symbols have lost their power. This study provides one possible approach in helping women learn new ways to reach out towards God and towards themselves.

Organization Of Material

In summary, then, chapter two contains a discussion of the issues in women's spirituality and how those interface with some contemporary theological concerns. It also explores some resources from current work in feminist theology. Chapter three discusses the issues in the psychology of women since Freud and the new developments being contributed by feminist psychologists. Chapter four focusses on the field of imagery psychology and the integrative value for the work of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction that it has to offer.

Chapters two, three, and four are the theoretical foundations to the study reported in the next two chapters. This study is an integrative effort between psychology, theology, and imagery, and, as such, needed a thorough grounding in each of those fields.

Chapter five describes the nature of the study in spiritual growth itself including the participants, the goals, the instruments, the group curriculum, and the process of the experience. The results, both

anecdotal and statistical, of that study are found in chapter six. And, in chapter seven, the conclusions and implications of the study are developed as are possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2
Feminist Issues of Spirituality:
A Theological Critique

Much of feminist theology organizes itself around one theme: the absence of women's spiritual experience recorded and reflected upon in theology. Women's religious faith experience and their reflections upon that experience have been significantly left out of theological and ecclesiastical formulations. And, more than having been left out, women's values, needs, character traits, purposes, roles, and relationships with men, women and God, have been assumed and assigned by the dominant power structure (white males), and then devalued. A dualistic approach to life has been the norm with clear separations between what should be unities (mind/body, thinking/feeling, spirit/nature, etc.) which then form the basis of theological categories. Rosemary Radford Ruether has focussed on the problem of dualism as the root of theological difficulties. The system of patriarchy goes from duality, which is a recognition of difference without a value judgment, to dualism which involves subordination and subjection. This movement from different and equal to different and unequal manifests itself in oppression and domination in many

dimensions, not only in the oppression of women by men.¹

In each dualism, one side has been characteristically assigned to the male experience and valued. The other side has been associated with the female experience and either ignored, scorned, feared, or punished. A corresponding hierarchy has been used to structure values and ways of being in the world, based on the dualistic polarities, descending from the most "male" to the least "male," and valued accordingly. The top of the hierarchy has been the very most male, which is the way God has been defined by the dominant theological tradition. And, as God is defined by male values and experience, the "natural order" is defined and established by this understanding of God. So, a "sacred circle" is established of a God named, defined and empowered by males, who in turn through human-created symbol and structure, names, defines, and empowers males. Women, in this system, are clearly "the other" and their experience is not received.

This belief in the powerful link between male monotheism and the oppression of women is becoming generally accepted. In late 1980, a report by the World Council Of Churches' Study Group on the Community of Men and Women in the Church was released. The twenty participants from seventeen countries felt that the doctrine of God's image and its importance for determining the status of women in both Church and society was a starting point for the meeting. They stated in the

¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminism and Patriarchal Religion: Principles of Ideological Critique of the Bible," Journal For The Study of the Old Testament, 22, no. 2 (February 1982): 57.

report, "We have discovered that an almost exclusively male image of God in the Christian tradition has helped cause the affirmation of male, white, Western superiority and has led to a sense of inferiority of women and of people from non-Western cultures."²

The knowledge and understanding of the dynamic between idolatrous male God language and oppression is growing and yet change in the use of this language is very slow. Nelle Morton tells a poignant story, from the early consciousness-raising groups, about learning to recognize the problem of language. She says,

The prevalence of male terminology in the common speech appeared insignificant at first. Everybody knew that everybody did not mean literally male and that was that. Then there came a time when it ceased to be funny. Women began hearing themselves shut out of their own traditions; alienated from church, synagogue, and other religious groups....³

The theme of imagery and language and its connection to women's ability to name themselves in their relationships, is a fundamental one. An investigation into the theological foundations of women's spiritual growth and identity must address the issues of male-dominated language and imagery in our culture as a whole and in the religious traditions specifically. For virtually all feminist theologians, language and imagery have been of central importance. This focus reflects the

² "A Report of the World Council of Churches," Ecumenical Review, 33, no. 1 (January 1981): 77.

³ Morton, The Journey Is Home, p. 19.

philosophical understanding that language does not just describe cultural reality. It also informs, influences, and, to a certain extent, creates that culture. And, the fact that the dominant male power structure has had chief responsibility for developing and defining language, as well as for interpreting the primary symbols and metaphors, results in a language and symbol system that discounts (and often devalues) women's experience. Consequently, it has become a central need for women theologians to take seriously the power of language, imagery and metaphors, and to develop a new language within which to explore and name women's spiritual experience.

Let us begin with a more general discussion of language before focussing on the specifics of religious language. It is important to note that language is never neutral. Language itself contains power. It never exists in a vacuum but is always a part of the sharing and shaping of the current context and the larger environment. Language is made up of more than concepts. Language carries thoughts, emotions, assumptions, symbols, paradigms, and more. One might say that language emerges from personal and corporate images and conveys new images to those that hear the language.

Images, as the integrative dimension of language, form an important starting place in looking at the concerns of feminist theologians. It is critical to recognize that words do more than signify. As Morton says,

Words conjure images. Images refer to that entity which arises out of conscious and unconscious lives individually and in community. They may shape styles of life long before conceptualization takes place. Images, therefore, are infinitely more powerful than concepts. Concepts can be

learned. Concepts can be corrected and can be made precise. Concepts can be formulated, enclosed and controlled. Concepts are linear. Images, on the other hand, cannot be so controlled. They are not so easy to identify or to describe. They have a life of their own. Often they function when persons are most unaware of their functioning.⁴

This consideration of the power of images will be important to remember when we discuss the issues around images which represent God in our religious lives.

Since, as Morton says, words conjure images, it is important to recognize the kinds of images they conjure. The issue of gender exclusive language is a case in point. The history of the development of the English language with the rise of so-called generic nouns and pronouns is too extensive to be addressed here. There are a number of books investigating that phenomenon.⁵

Suffice it to say that at one time there were separate words for "woman" (female), "man" (male), and "humanity." As the language evolved in a patriarchal culture, one word began to stand for both males and for humanity. This was the word "man." The fact that it was not possible to use a word generically when that same word was anything but generic in describing one half of the population, did not stand in the way of

4 Morton, The Journey Is Home, p. 20.

5 For language issues see Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Words and Women: New Language in New Times (Garden City, NY; Anchor Press, 1977) or Mary Betterling-Braggin, ed. Sexist Language: A Modern Philosophical Analysis (New York: Littlefield, Adams, and Co., 1981).

this grammatical development. The explanation (which has become somewhat of a "joke" in feminist circles) that everyone knows that "man" includes women has been used, and is still used, to justify the use of this non-generic generic.

In 1972 a study was done at Drake University by Joseph Schneider and Sally Hacker. They designed an experiment to test the hypothesis that "man" is generally understood to include "woman." Large numbers of magazine pictures were collected and students were asked to choose possible textbook illustrations from among these pictures. One half of the students were given chapter titles such as "Social Man," "Political Man," "Industrial Man," etc. The other half were given chapter headings such as "Society," "Industrial Life," and "Political Behavior."

The results were startling. Clearly in the minds of students of both sexes the word "man" conjures up the image of males only. The students with these headings tended to choose pictures of males only, involved in the work of the culture. The word seemed to "filter out" the knowledge that women also participated in these areas of life. The headings which did not use the word "man" stimulated the students to choose pictures of both men and women. The results were statistically significant. The authors concluded, "This is rather convincing evidence that when you use the word "man" generically, people do tend to think male, and tend not to think female."⁶

⁶ Miller and Swift, Words and Women, p. 19.

There have been other important studies done with various methodologies and populations. They reach the same conclusions. "Generic" nouns and pronouns do not produce "generic" images. They produce male-specific images. The implications are profound. Male images are generated signifying men as the doers and the controllers in the society. Females and their experience become invisible in the face of grammar which does not acknowledge their existence. Here is a clear case where language and imagery not only reflect the way of the world, but participate in maintaining the status quo. From the child's beginning ability to comprehend language, these images form in the child's thinking and provide the structure within which to make sense of the world. They see the status quo of the dominant system as "reality" and live accordingly. The images participate in the reality and help to perpetuate it as reality. There have been studies done showing that even preschoolers have male images evoked upon hearing "generic" language.

What happens when women (and men) attempt to change this process? Nelle Morton describes her experience, saying, "As women questioned the generic use of male words, they were put down repeatedly with ridicule. Finally, it became quite evident to them that male and not the generic in male terminology was meant. Once women began to be aware of what language had done to them as little girls and was now doing to their own little girls, they experienced as dehumanizing the pervasive male

character of the entire language system."⁷

She goes on to say, "There is no longer doubt in the minds of liberated women that the common speech of the American people presents an image of male control in pulpit, politics, education, industry, and family. It has become obvious that this language of the people reflects their history, their world view, their understanding of one another, and the value placed on their lives together."⁸

And, again, in reflecting these world views and values, the words and images participate in keeping them strong. The words/images and the structures mutually shore up one another.

These issues, which are reflected in the culture at large, take on additional power and authority when one looks at them in the realm of religion. Nelle Morton addresses these issues of sexually exclusive language and imagery in the life of the Church when she says,

We cannot escape the fact that Lord, Master, King, and other such terms for deity were uniquely of a patriarchal culture. Use of overwhelmingly male language for God, educating and theologizing out of male experience only, as if it were the whole human experience, simply excludes far more than half of the earth's peoples. Remember, it is the image that shapes life styles -- not the concept. It is the image that perpetuates the hierarchical structures that would keep us all in bondage.⁹

7 Morton, The Journey is Home, p. 19.

8 Ibid., p. 20.

9 Ibid., p. 111.

Rosemary Radford Ruether says that "the oppression of women is undoubtedly the oldest form of oppression in human history and as such can be historically paradigmatic for all other forms of oppression."¹⁰

And, in Words and Women, Casey Miller and Kate Swift say,

Nowhere are the semantic roadblocks to sexual equality more apparent or significant than in the language of the dominant organized religions. This is ironic but not surprising. Religious thinkers are forced to depend on symbols, particularly on metaphors and analogies, to describe and communicate to others what is by nature indescribable except in terms of human experience. The symbols are not intended to be taken literally but to point beyond themselves to a reality that can only be dimly perceived at best.¹¹

In order to make sense of these statements we need to put them in the context of the dualistic thinking discussed earlier in the chapter. When the structures and rules of society are projected into the religious realm, and there consecrated as "natural order," then the symbols of the culture itself take on a divine significance. Male dominance becomes divinely inspired by a male God who rules "over" "His" people. Men then covenant with this male brother/father God, and women are ruled over by the men. Women's experience is not considered necessary in order to make sense out of the world because men have a special and exclusive alliance with God. As Ruether says, "Women no longer stand in direct relation to God; they are connected to God secondarily, through the male... A symbolic hierarchy is set up:

¹⁰ Carter Heyward, "Ruether and Daly: Theologians Speaking and Sparking, Building and Burning," Christianity and Crisis, 39, no. 5 (2 April 1979): 70.

¹¹ Miller and Swift, p. 64.

God-male-female."¹²

There are two primary concerns to be considered here. One is the maleness which becomes essential to God's nature. This validates the rights and privileges bestowed on males by virtue of their God-likeness. But the second issue, which is even more important than this, is the problem of the literalness of the image itself. The distance between the symbol and the reality has been erased and God has become the Father in the Sky. We will look at each of these issues in turn, beginning with the second.

Alan Watts, in The Wisdom of Insecurity, writes, "The common error of ordinary practice is to mistake the symbol for reality, to look at the finger pointing the way and then to suck it for comfort rather than follow it."¹³

This seems, clearly, to have been the fate of the symbol of father for God. When the distance between the symbol and the reality collapses, then an idol is established. In other words, the symbol is worshipped and relied upon instead of that towards which it points. In the very concreteness of the idol, security is gained but the richness of the reality is lost. As we defined metaphor earlier, the "is not" function of the metaphor behind the symbol is lost. Without the

¹² Ruether, Sexism and God Talk-Toward A Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon, 1983), p. 53.

¹³ Milton P. Ehrlich, "Self Acceptance and Meditation," Journal of Pastoral Counseling 11, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1976/77): 38.

metaphorical quality, a symbol is doomed to failure. The symbolic image points to nothing even while we are saying that it does. At best, it points to a memory of its original power. Ruether suggests that the Fatherhood of God as a metaphoric symbol was probably, at one point, shockingly effective. Certainly Jesus' use of the term "abba" must have been startling in his culture as a radical metaphor of God's personal care and involvement. But this quality has been lost in a culture where God is not talked about as being like a father, but is identified as the Father.

Swanee Hunt Meeks says that Paul Tillich once described the "sublime embarrassment with which we must speak of God." She goes on to say,

Naming the ineffable must always be uncomfortable. What shall we say then about the comfort with which we speak of God in male terms? We have abandoned fidelity to the mystery, choosing instead a culturally comfortable but faithless packaging of God. To break out of that form is to go beyond the prescriptions of the culture. It is to assert the leadership of our faith, the priority of our faith, over the confines of our culture. And it is to participate in the message of value and worth to a group of persons who have been individually and systematically discounted.¹⁴

The last portion of this statement speaks to more than just the idolatry of a dead symbol. It also speaks to its irrelevance to a large group of people. Sallie McFague bases much of her theological system (which we will be exploring later) on what she calls the twin evils of idolatry and irrelevance. She feels that our religious

¹⁴ Swanee Hunt Meeks, "The Motherhood of God: A Symbol for Pastoral Care," Iliff Review, 37, no.3 (Fall 1980): 35.

language and metaphors must emerge out of the "interpretive context" in which we live. That context recognizes that we are particular people with a particular culture, social structure, history, and so on. She writes,

If we lose sight of the relativity and plurality of the interpretive context, our religious language will, as with the loss of the religious context, become idolatrous or irrelevant. It will become idolatrous for we will absolutize one tradition of images for God; it will become irrelevant, for the experience of many people will not be included within the canonized tradition.¹⁵

When one looks at the way the image of God who is the Father functions, it is clear that it does not reflect a cultural context which is in the process of change. Its primacy and authority help hold religion from moving forward in dialogue with the changing culture. When a central symbol such as Father for God becomes concrete, thereby losing its vitality, then religion sacrifices its dialogical relationship with the culture. McFague says,

The issues of idolatry and irrelevance come together in the image of God as father, for more than any other dominant model in Christianity, this one has been both absolutized by some and, in recent times, found meaningless by others...The feminist critique of God as father centers on the dominance of this model to the exclusion of others and on the failure of this model to deal with the anomaly presented by those whose experience is not included by this model.¹⁶

15 McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p.:13.

16 Ibid., p.:145.

I would argue that even those whose experience is included but who have absolutized this model lose out by the very nature of the loss of the symbol's metaphorical quality. The absolutizing of the symbol makes it as meaningless to those who hold onto it as to those whose experience is not included in it. McFague draws an image at one point in her book by saying that if all streams directed as quickly as possible to one river of truth, many people would be parched. It seems to me that we owe it to ourselves and to our religious culture as a whole to explore all the little brooks, lakes, puddles, and irrigation ditches, and the varieties of rivers of truth that they feed. Only in that process can we even begin to drink of the richness of the divine reality.

The second point, in our discussion, of the specific maleness of God and the relationship of that to an ongoing male dominance and female exclusion is also a central theme in feminist theology. This point, along with the idolatry of any single symbol, are the two foundational theological concerns upon which my investigation into women's spiritual growth is based. These two primary theological issues are a crucial resource in the work of pastoral counseling with women and with men. They provide a link between theology, the science, and spirituality, the living out of the faith. They offer a means through which religion, institutional and personal, can remain relevant to the lives of individuals seeking to integrate life and faith.

Mary Daly raises an important point that has frequently been used to trivialize the issues around the gender of God imagery when she writes,

Sophisticated thinkers, of course, have never intellectually

identified God with an elderly parent in heaven. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that when very abstract conceptualizations of God are formulated in the mind, images have a way of surviving in the imagination in such a way that a person can function on two different and even apparently contradictory levels at the same time...Such primitive images can profoundly affect conceptualizations which appear to be very refined and abstract.¹⁷

Current research in imagery verifies that people live primarily out of their images rather than their thinking. Images are foundational to thinking, feeling, and action because images are the unity of all three of these functions, whether conscious or unconscious. When one's image of God is rigid and fixed, it functions as an arbitrator and definer of God's law. The meaning behind all that one thinks, feels or does is contained in the image. No matter what one intellectualizes at the theological level, the image rules. If that single image, which defines God internally and externally, is a patriarchal one, that justification for dualistic thinking, which places males over females as God is over males, is justified.

Is a male image for God part of the natural order? Is there some sort of divine need for a God image to be that of Father (or Ruler or Lord, etc.)? Ruether writes,

Male monotheism has been so taken for granted in Judeo-Christian culture that the peculiarity of imaging God solely through one gender has not been recognized. But such an image indicates a sharp departure from all previous human consciousness. It is possible that the social origins of male monotheism lie in nomadic herding societies. These cultures

¹⁷ Mary Daly, "After the Death of God the Father," in WomanSpirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 56.

lacked the female gardening role and tended to image God as the Sky-Father... This male monotheism reinforces the social hierarchy of patriarchal rule through its religious system in a way that was not the case with the paired images of god and goddess. God is modeled after the patriarchal ruling class and is seen as addressing this class of males directly.¹⁸

It is necessary to think of God through imagery, and imagery has its base in our experience. However, the cultural expression of those images has been out of male experience over the history of the Judeo-Christian traditions. Those images of God that are not masculine, which astoundingly were able to break through patriarchy and be recorded in the Judeo-Christian Scriptural canon, have been trivialized by the male interpreters of that canon. It is not that God manifests God's self as a male or even with stereotypically male qualities. It is that we struggle to make sense of God's participation with us through whatever experiential/symbolic resources we can, both publically and privately. The images emerge out of private and corporate experience, but those that become known and "elevated" are those of the dominant culture--the male experience. These, now public, symbols then become the norm through which all people are taught and encouraged to experience God and to reflect on themselves in relationship to God.

The consequences of this are far-reaching. The symbols have emerged out of a patriarchal culture. A paternal model has become a symbol of patriarchy. The symbol, created by the culture, returns to the culture to reinforce its dominant practices, whether they contribute

18 Ruether, Sexism and God Talk, p. 53.

to the wholeness of all people or not. In the case of the paternal/patriarchal primal symbol of God the Father, wholeness for women is not encouraged or even noticed.

To cite just one example of how women are denied full personhood based on this culturally derived symbol of Fatherhood, let me quote the Episcopal Bishop of California when he made an extended statement in 1972 opposing the ordination of women to the priesthood. He wrote,

A priest is a 'God-symbol' whether he likes it or not. In the imagery of both the Old and New Testaments, God is represented in masculine imagery. The father begets the son. This is essential to the givingness of the Christian faith, and to tamper with this imagery is to change that faith to something else... This does not mean that God is a male, for biblical language is the language of analogy. It is imperfect, even as all human imagery of God must be imperfect. Nonetheless, it has meaning. The male image about God pertains to the divine initiative in creation. Initiative is plainly a masculine kind of imagery, making priesthood a masculine conception.¹⁹

As with any defense of male God imagery, there is an element of truth in this statement. A priest, minister, or rabbi is a God-symbol of sorts and through her or his presence and function, new images for God can be created. Although the Bishop's biology is rather outdated, reflecting the primitive understanding of male sperm containing the entire procreative potential and the woman as passive incubator, his fear is based in reality. As women become God-symbols, and women's experience is taken seriously in making sense of God and the world, patriarchy and its normative male dominance cannot survive. It is true

19 Miller and Swift, Words and Women, p. 69.

in any liberation movement that it is clearer for those in power to see what they have to lose than what they have to gain.

It is important, however, to recognize the extent of the losses which have affected both men and women. In maintaining the rigid, hierarchical, dualistic thinking that has enabled an idolatrous/irrelevant religious system to flourish, both men and women have lost the vitality of the faith experience that should be available to them. Of particular interest to us in this study is the high price of women's self esteem and spiritual identity within this system.

Swanee Hunt Neeks speaks of this loss as she tells the story of teaching a class on theology and pastoral care. The topic of the lecture was about the possibility of the motherhood of God as one way to speak about God. There were a variety of reactions to the lecture from the belief that she was being blasphemous to trivializing it by saying that if God has no gender, why bother. Some felt that the process of developing new God symbols was inconvenient and annoying. Neeks continues, "The arguments continued on an intellectual level that belied the emotional investment of the speakers. But the discussion was cut through in one statement by a woman who penetrated to where the real issue was when she said, 'I can't believe that in a class dealing with pastoral care, you are talking about a symbol of my self-worth in terms of your convenience.'"²⁰

Obviously, women's self-esteem cannot be the sole criteria

²⁰ Neeks, "The Motherhood of God," p. 32.

informing a new God image. But it is important to see here what a single, literalized, idolatrous, patriarchal image of God has done to women's self-worth.

There is no question that the damage has not just been to women. A hierarchical, dualistic theology tends to separate people from parts of themselves, from each other, from the earth, from the web of life. The crises we experience on our planet at this time, such as the ecological and the nuclear crises, can be set in the context of dualistic thinking resulting from a patriarchal mind set. But, it is too easy to lose the power of women's issues when the problem is framed as one of human crisis and human need for liberation, even though this is an accurate frame. First, the issue must be seen in terms of its personal and corporate ramifications for women.

The response of women who recognize this phenomenon is to pull away, in one form or another, from this system and re-orient themselves spiritually by centering in women's experience, their own and others, historically and in the contemporary scene. Carol Ochs writes, in her book Women and Spirituality, "If what some of us experience is not taken seriously, is misnamed or remains unnamed, and is not given a place in a vision of reality, three things can happen." She goes on to describe the three consequences as (1) we stop having those experiences and thereby lose some of life; (2) we become estranged from our own experience (and its identity-giving value) and live inauthentically; or

(3) we contort ourselves in an effort to make our experience conform to what counts as a "real experience" in the prevailing system.²¹

My clinical work confirms that women who have not recognized the way their spiritual lives are not "counted" as real and defining, (mal)adapt through the above three options. What is clear in all three of these attempts to "fit in" to a system that isn't relevant or nurturing to them is a strong, generally unconscious, sense of fear that if they let go of these approaches to their religious lives, they would be left with a void. They would lose their relationships with the Church, with their significant others, with God, and with the parts of themselves with which they are in touch. They are, at some level, aware of what they have to lose but not of what there is to gain. The potential gains of a deeper, identifying connection with God and a stronger sense of worth are hidden in a patriarchal church and culture which does not encourage wholeness for women.

The images of women propagated by this religious system teach us to, as Nelle Morton says, "educate ourselves and our children to speak to her own destruction." She goes on to say that the same process is happening to her as an older person. She writes, "Now I am finding it the same with images of workers, older people, and especially women. I am shattered all over again to learn the subtle ways, in succeeding generations, we have created images of women who are sweet, clinging, dependent, with shallow minds and no political ambition, and limited to

²¹ Carol Ochs, Women and Spirituality (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), p. 25.

the private sphere."²²

There is no question that women who become aware of the destructive images which are all around them tend to use words like "shattered" when they talk about the consequences of that awareness. In all events, the corporate and personal consequences of male monotheism or Father God idolatry are far reaching. After all, as Morton points out,

What name for God is free from sexist imagery?...There is no God language free from sexist imagery. Elohim conceptually transcended sexism, but in its interchangeable use with masculine names for God has been filled with masculine imagery. The other names (Lord, King, Mighty One, Everlasting Father, etc.) with accompanying masculine pronouns and attributes, project images of domination and sex partiality. To include the feminine opposites for the purpose of equality and balance falls short of the dream of women. They still draw from stereotyped cultural images.

She concludes by saying, "Old symbols and imagery root too deeply in a patriarchal culture to function adequately in the new context."²³

Feminist writer after writer echoes the sentiments of the power of the traditional religious images, the exclusive male image of God, the lack of religious role models in the tradition, the religious strictures and rules designed to squelch women, and the current forms of church polity and leadership which negatively affect women's identity and self-esteem at both conscious and preconscious levels. These issues are central in feminist theology despite the different approaches people take to them.

²² Morton, The Journey Is Home, p. 110.

²³ Morton, The Journey Is Home, p. 73.

Within the diversity among feminist theologians there are several basic assumptions shared by them. The first of these is that feminist theology is experiential theology. In other words, feminist theology begins in and returns to women's experience. Ruether says that there is nothing novel about grounding one's theological system in experience. In fact, she says that all theologies, and the hermeneutical circle of theology, begin in experience. What is novel about this assumption, according to Ruether, is that women claim the right for themselves. As has been discussed above, women's experience has been consistently ignored and/or devalued in theological formulation throughout history. It is truly radical to ground theology in women's experience.

A second assumption that feminist theologians share is that feminist theology is critical. It looks carefully at the traditions and at the foundations and threads underlying tradition. It explores the kinds of reflection that have gone on about the traditions. Ruether formulates this critical quality under the heading of the Critical Feminist Principle, which says, in effect, that whatever promotes the full humanity of women is of the holy. The reverse also fits. Anything that does not promote the full humanity of women is not of the holy.²⁴

Again, Ruether says that the critical principal in and of itself is not unique to theology. It is the fact that this principal is claimed for the benefit and wholeness of women which makes it special.

The third assumption is that feminist theology aligns itself with other oppressed people in an attempt to expose interlocking injustices

²⁴ Ruether, Sexism and God Talk, p. 19.

such as classism, racism, and ageism, and to work towards eliminating them. In other words, feminist theology is a liberation theology concerned with sexism and other forms of oppression that restrict the full humanity of persons. This assumption undergirds all feminist theology to one extent or another but varies in its intensity of focus. This is one area of common concern to feminist theology that needs more attention.

There are other common characteristics of most feminist theologians. Included among these are a tendency to be eclectic in character as a way to experiment with what will work as long term theological resources. Another common characteristic of feminist theology is its interdisciplinary and ecumenical tendencies. Again, there is a desire to be as broad and as inclusive as possible in a search for new resources and paradigms. And, finally, feminist theology tends to focus on language and imagery as foundational to finding ways to break through oppressive symbols that unconsciously and consciously facilitate patriarchal continuation.

Despite these assumptions and commonalities, there are various theological approaches within the broad category of feminist theology. First of all, as Wanda Warren Berry defines it, "feminist theology consciously expresses the world and experience of women seeking human equality and reflects upon God from the point of view of that world."²⁵

²⁵ Wanda Warren Berry, "Images of Sin and Salvation in Feminist Theology," Anglican Theological Review, 60, no. 1 (1978): 25.

Within that broad definition, feminist theology is frequently divided into the categories of "reformist" and "revolutionary." These categories are not rigid, and many people have elements of both types. The reformists believe that, although the religious institutions, leadership, and theology are patriarchal, they are capable of reform from within. These women remain inside the structures of the Church in order to carry out that task. There is a broad range within the revisionist category from the more conservative, evangelical traditions (e.g. Mollenkott, Tribble) who seek to reclaim forgotten women's experience and reinterpret the traditions to the more liberal types (e.g. Ruether, McFague) who seek to find new models and paradigms to reorganize and revitalize the church.

People in the revolutionary category feel that the very roots of the Church are patriarchal and, since they are organized around root metaphors which are oppressive, there is no possibility of causing liberating change within the Church. These women have sought elsewhere for women-identified spiritual communities. Again, there is a broad range of viewpoints within this category including Goddess worship (Christ, Daly), formation of witches' covens (Z. Budapest), identification with nature, and other choices. They all fit the definitions of feminist theology in that they develop, value, and reflect upon women's spiritual experience and make sense of the world through that reflection.

For the purpose of this study, which would fall within the revisionist understanding, Sallie McFague's system of metaphorical theology is most helpful to understanding the power of images, symbols,

metaphors, and models, and their relationship to women's identity and spiritual growth. Therefore, we will take the time to look at that system in a little more detail.

McFague begins with certain base assumptions. The first of these is her belief that religious language needs to be grounded in a religious context. It is this religious consciousness that makes us aware that all our words and images for God are inadequate. Without that, we tend to identify our words with the reality of God. Consequently the words and resultant image becomes the object of our worship, not God. It is also the religious context and our awareness of it that makes us realize God's active presence in our lives. With that knowledge, we then have the motivation to speak about God and to find God's activity significant to us personally and corporately.

One of the major problems with contemporary religious life, according to McFague, is that we have become extreme literalists. She is not alone in that belief. Most feminist theologians find the tendency toward the literalism of symbols to be very disturbing. Dorothy Soelle, in her reflection on images of God and God language, comments, "Any word can become a symbol prison which fixates what we imagine, speaks to our readiness to submit, and, in so doing, destroys our readiness for union."²⁶

In other words, when we become literalist in religious language,

²⁶ Dorothy Soelle, "A Feminist Reflection: Mysticism, Liberation and the Names of God," Christianity and Crisis, 41, no. 11 (22 June 1981): 184.

the images of God and religion no longer serve as vehicles to experience the divine reality. We have only our words without experiential relationship to that towards which the symbolic language is supposed to point. We are faced with both idolatry and irrelevance together in the sterility of a literalized symbol. Rita Gross, speaking out of a Jewish context, echoes this sentiment when she writes,

Although it is often ignored, the attitudinal 'as if' or 'as it were' is fundamental to the religious enterprise. If the 'as if' changes to 'it is', if what is focussed on is the metaphor instead of what it points to, religion becomes idolatry... For a poverty of religious imagination characteristic of the contemporary milieu makes many people idolaters today. They simply block out of their consciousness the metaphorical nature of religious language and become addicted to the linguistic conventions, the signs and tools of religious discourse.²⁷

One might ask why our culture has developed this literalism that causes idolatry and irrelevance in our religious language. What is it about our time that creates this problem? McFague responds,

The reasons for extreme religious literalism in our time...is not only that many people have lost the practice of religious contemplation and prayer which alone is sufficient to keep literalism at bay, or that positivistic scientism has rejected a narrow view of truth in our culture. While both are true, it is also the case that we do not think in symbols in way our forebears did. A symbolic sensibility sees multilayered realities, with the literal level suggestive of meanings beyond itself.²⁸

I do not believe that the problem is really that we do not think in

27 Rita Gross, "Female God Language in a Jewish Context," in *WomanSpirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 169.

28 McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, p. 5.

symbols anymore. It is that we have been schooled in a dualism that favors thinking over feeling, facts over intuition, and "truth" over possibility. The image, which still is the major unit of our cognitive process works in an integrative fashion, breaking through the dualism. However, we have been taught to translate out of that experience into the rational, linear language which is only a part of the whole imaging process. The rest, where the value and potential of religious experience resides, is discarded as meaningless. We do not need to regain our ability to think in symbols. We do that already. We need to bring the process back to our awareness, valuing the integration of the whole image, and trusting it and using it as our language.

Some of the consequences of irrelevance and idolatry have been addressed above. The fact that the idol which is primary in our culture, that of God who is the Father, is important in its participation in validating an oppressive, patriarchal culture is a part of these consequences. The idol, then, not only deadens us to vital religious experience, but serves to create and maintain a system that devalues and ignores women. As McFague says, "Feminists generally agree that whoever names the world, owns the world. The current resistance to inclusive or unbiased language, for instance, both at the social and religious level, indicates that people know instinctively that a revolution in language means a revolution in one's world."²⁹

McFague's theological system is a comprehensive approach to both problems of idolatry and irrelevance. It is based on the premise that

²⁹ Ibid., p. 8.

many images and models for God are necessary in order to avoid these "twin evils." She writes, "A metaphorical theology will insist that many metaphors and models are necessary, that a piling up of images is essential, both to avoid idolatry and to attempt to express the richness and variety of the divine-human relationship."³⁰

McFague, upon investigation and reflection, concludes that the root metaphor of Christianity is not God the Father but rather the liberation of the oppressed, expressed in the language of relationship. She finds the exemplar of this root metaphor, for Christians, to be in Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, McFague believes that, although the Judeo-Christian traditions emerge out of a thoroughly patriarchal cultural setting, they are of value to us because the root metaphor of liberation through relationship, exemplified by Jesus, can help us break free of the patriarchal oppression.

Ruether also approaches the tradition in a similar way, stating that the prophetic traditions of Judaism and Christianity are key to making the tradition a grounding for continuing theological reflection towards human liberation and wholeness.³¹

McFague, then, designates Jesus as a parable of God through which we are able to more fully understand the divine nature and the need for

³⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

³¹ Ruether, Sexism and God Talk, p. 16.

personal, relational language about God. She writes, "This means that personal, relational images are central in a metaphorical theology. This should not be seen as crude anthropomorphism, but as foundational language, the dominant model of God-talk."³²

This does not mean that Jesus justified patriarchal language about God, but personal language. McFague points out that this does not mean we have to talk about God in the personal language as the tradition has interpreted it. The foundation is the relational language, not the patriarchy.

McFague's system begins in the metaphorical image which she categorizes as primary language about God. It is generally personal and individually generated. She, using what I consider to be unfortunate language, implying hierarchical values, says that we move along the continuum from primary, imagistic language to secondary conceptual language. This is interpretive language. My own belief is that both types of thinking are done imagistically but her point regarding the dialogue between symbols and interpretation is well-taken. She believes that without interpretation, symbols cannot help us in theological reflection. It is her conclusion that it is the interpretation of metaphorical images which helps us keep in mind their metaphorical nature and thus keeps us from literalizing them.

McFague explains that in moving from metaphorical symbols to interpretation and back again, a model emerges. She defines a model as,

32 McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p. 20.

"a dominant metaphor which has a wide appeal." It is a mixed structure integrating imagistic and conceptual thinking. She says that models give us a frame in which to think about the unknown in terms of the known. They, again, demand interpretation in order to keep us from idolatry, and the dialogue where "images feed concepts and concepts discipline images" is the organizing reality.³³

It is important to understand McFague's concept of models. For her they are the frame upon which theology is woven. The model moves beyond the metaphor because it has the potential to speak to the experience of communities of people. She indicates that the "fatherness" of God was once a vital model which probably emerged out of a startling metaphor. She describes the relationship between metaphor and model when she remarks, "In the semantical view of metaphor, the judgment of similarity (and difference) has structural and organizing possibilities because we are dealing here with two matrices of thought, two systems of associated commonplaces. It is because some metaphors have structural possibilities that models can develop from them, for models are dominant metaphors with comprehensive organizational potential."³⁴

Metaphorical religious images emerge at the personal level in the context of contemplative worship or reflection or out of some other

33 Ibid., p. 26.

34 Ibid., p. 39.

experiential state of openness to the divine reality. The study reported in this project work at the metaphorical level, primarily, rather than the level of the model. Metaphors come from within and beyond ourselves. When we reflect upon them, at the corporate level, and find that they organize other thoughts and images into integrated, meaningful wholes, they become models. As McFague notes, "Metaphors (and models) are not considered true because they correspond with some uninterpreted reality, but because they give us a more apt, fitting way of interpreting reality than did the traditional view."³⁵

Metaphors and models, however, do not emerge out of a vacuum. They tend to be meaningful because they find ways to take hold and make sense of the traditional as well as the contemporary experience. The most helpful models embody both simplicity and detail. They must be simple enough to make clear, intellectual and affective connections and detailed enough to have the potential for interpretive development.

McFague also talks about two other dimensions in her system. First, she refers to paradigms, which have to do with a total context of interpretation within which reflection upon dominant models take place. A paradigm is highly resistant to change. Second, this concept of paradigm is closely related to her final concept, that of root metaphor. She describes a root metaphor in the following way. "The broadest type of theological model--the metaphysical model of the relations between God, human being, and the world--is without limit, and hence, unfalsifiable." This is the root metaphor or original model. It is

35 Ibid., p. 41

typically expressed in Judeo-Christian tradition in terms of personal relations and conveys that "the ultimate goal of theology is comprehension of all reality by means of a root metaphor and its dominant models."³⁶

For McFague, the heart and soul of theology is the network of ever-changing models within the context of the root metaphor of the tradition. The ebb and flow of old and new models is the safeguard against both idolatry and irrelevance. Religious models, though, have a tendency to turn into idols because they tend to endure. McFague says that there are two reasons for this. First, they are broad in scope and, consequently, appear to be "above change." Second, they are used in community liturgy repetitively as a way of providing continuity to a tradition and in this they sacrifice a certain amount of metaphorical openness to change and responsiveness to the relevancy of people's lives.

The patriarchal contamination of theology has profound psychological as well as theological implications. A God who has been ascribed literal male qualities which then validates human male superiority cannot help but affect female self-esteem. This does not mean that the psychological and theological categories should be blurred but it does mean that theology can and does impact psychology just as psychology impacts theology. In making this point, feminist theologians may often seem to be equating theology and psychology. It would be

36 McFague, Metaphorical Theology, p. 104.

better to clearly say that the two fields meet on many different grounds without losing their autonomy.

As we talk about the psychological consequences of a patriarchal theology, it is also important to note that a theology developed solely in reaction to these psychological hurts, which is meant to strengthen women's self-esteem at all costs, does not address the deeper theological problems. The core of the theological problem is that of idolatry. A primary symbol/model for God, that of father, has been literalized and held up as God itself. This can happen to any symbol which is held exclusively and literally. If the symbol of God the Mother were chosen as the primary symbol and it, eventually, lost its metaphorical quality, that would be just as demonic as the idolatry of God the Father, despite the fact that it would enhance the self-esteem of women.

The theological issues must never be lost or subsumed within the psychological issues. The great gift of a metaphorical theology is that all symbols are seen as metaphorical representations of God, with similarities and differences. And, the differences are seen as strong enough to prevent the similarities being turned into a literal representation. The emphasis on having a variety of metaphorical symbols for God, as well as the ability to create ongoing symbols, provides a greater insurance against idolatry.

It is crucial to a metaphorical theology, therefore, that at both the individual and the corporate levels, new metaphorical and symbolic images and models are generated to balance against the tendency for religious models to stagnate. I believe that all people should be

encouraged and taught to develop metaphorical religious thinking so that, at the least, they will be on guard against idolatry on the part of the religious institutions. If this can be encouraged and developed among people, then theological imagination will be the task of all. The result will be a tradition which has a living dimension of a current, relevant religious context. If we do not engage together in this task, it seems to me that theology will die under the weight of its idolatrous and irrelevant and patriarchal traditions with no vehicle into the present or the future.

One of the major tasks confronting feminist theology is that of facilitating the practice and growth of women's spirituality in community with others, with access to the elements of wholeness in the traditions. This is a major task. It involves women learning to trust women. It involves finding a way to bring the tradition into the present while critiquing it for its powerful threads of patriarchy. It involves the integration of this critiqued theology with an ongoing, relevant, symbol-making, contemporary theology. And, it involves a willingness for all people, institutional leaders as well as the people of the church and the religiously disenfranchised, to engage in theology-building together. These are the directions of my commitment as a revisionist feminist theologian engaged in pastoral counseling. And, it is with this vision in mind that I embarked on this project which attempts to operationalize feminist theology at the level of women in life and faith transitions. The work in this study is directed primarily at those women who consciously wish to remain within the basic traditions.

The theological approach which offers the most potential in my work is a metaphorical one. McFague's approach to metaphorical theology has been detailed in this chapter because it's foundations are well-developed and relevant to this study.

There are certain elements of McFague's theological system which are particularly helpful to my theological approach in this investigation. I will summarize those points in preparation to moving on to look at the psychological foundations for the study.

First of all, McFague and others suggest that it is necessary in a metaphorical theology to generate many, ongoing metaphorical images and models in order to guard against literalizing them. When there are only a few images we can choose one or two that do not contradict each other and let them stand in place of the divine reality. As Gracia Grindall says, "It is in the clash of these images that we learn something about God, not in smoothing out all of the paradoxes and contradictions."³⁷

A second central point of metaphorical theology is that models must reflect experience. The starting place for both metaphors and models is in personal and corporate experience. Particularly at this point in our religious history, the experience of those people who have been left out of generating models--non-white, non-Western, non-male people--need to be heard. They need to provide the models that can integrate and lead the tradition to a more whole reality.

Third, metaphorical theology is not a passive theology. It is a

³⁷ Gracia Grindall, "Reflections on God 'The Father,'" Word and World, 4, no.1 (Winter, 1984): 52.

building up and a tearing down of theological models. It is a networking between models and people and God. It is a vehicle through which to address social, political, and cultural realities. When we engage in metaphorical theology we are actively participating in our personal religious contexts and impacting the communal religious context.

Metaphorical theology begins at the personal level, with each of us allowing our experience of God in our lives and in the world to manifest itself in metaphorical images and symbols that we take seriously. And the process of sharing these images with one another is an important part of the theological process. From that starting point, models are created. Women have never been encouraged to believe that their experience is valuable. It is especially important for women to engage in this theological process both because the theological tradition is devoid of images born of women's experience and because as women reach out to name God and the reality of creation, they are also beginning to name themselves. And the reverse is also true. As Mary Daly has said, "In hearing and naming ourselves out of the depths, women are naming toward God which is what theology always should have been about. Unfortunately, it tended to stop at fixing names upon God, which deafened us to our potential for self-naming."³⁸

While these elements of McFague's metaphorical theology are very

³⁸ Mary Daly, "Why Speak About God?" in WomanSpirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 213.

helpful in setting the theological stage, it is important to note that its primary benefit in this study is that it provides both a way to address the tradition by finding root metaphors (which serve a critical function for the tradition) and by enabling the development of a fresh, relevant, ongoing, symbol-making theology which is available to all people. These foundational elements, more than its conclusions (e.g. her assessment of Christian theology's root metaphor or her organizing model of God as friend) are what make her system extraordinarily helpful.

As my concern is for the operationalizing of a healthy theology for women's spiritual growth, the natural accessibility of this metaphorical theology for application in enhancing spiritual growth is of primary importance. The process of women's personal and spiritual growth enhances and is enhanced by the growth of a metaphorical theology. As a pastoral counselor, I consistently see women and men who do not have the spiritual resources with which to make sense of their lives in the world. The theological formulations of the Church over the centuries are meaningless to them. Often "theology" is an awe-inspiring word representing work best left to the "hierarchy" of the Church. They have taken the primary symbols of God and of their relationship to God which the Church has offered and tried to fit it into their lives. Generally, they have found an area where it can and does fit. Unfortunately, it tends to be a little corner of their lives that remains stagnant while many of the rest of their symbols for dealing with life grow and change in response to experience. The God image is often allowed to enter consciousness and even gain dominance on certain occasions. These usually involve either intentional worship time or a time of life

crisis. The God image is frequently used as a protective shield during a crisis and then closed off again.

However, there are times when a life crisis demands more than a person's God image symbol can give. In those cases, the symbol is either called into question and challenged or the person assumes that it is herself of himself which is inadequate and the God image remains superfluously intact. When a person in a life crisis allows their God image to be challenged, often she or he is faced with a quandary. The awareness that the God image is inadequate is often followed by the conclusion, due to the cultural tendency to literalize isolated God images, that it is actually God who is inadequate. The individual has never been taught that appropriate images for God are as infinite as God is and that it is out of our own experience, in dialogue with the traditions and with God that symbolic images for God are formed and made real.

It is, therefore, either an individual filled with self-hatred at their own inadequacy in the face of this life crisis, accompanied by their sense of God's blame, or, an individual who is bitter at God's inadequacy and failure. Both of these common situations fill me with the conviction that theological formulations must not only be accessible to all who are in touch with their spirituality, but must actually be formed in dialogue between the people engaging in spiritual growth and the "keepers of the tradition," who represent the institutional Church in many forms. The study reported in this project is one attempt to do just that.

A theological position which assumes a multiplicity of images and

which is founded on the sharing of those images and models in community while allowing and thriving on the constant building up and tearing down of those models, is one which cannot become exclusive and divisive. As it is formed out of experience, with an appreciation for the experience of others, a metaphorical theology will enhance our sense of relatedness. Its critique will be reserved for idolatry (literalizing single symbols) and irrelevancy (not using experience as the grounding for symbol-making).

The primary themes out of our tradition, the personal and relational nature of God, the presence of God's activity in every aspect of creation, the prophetic voice criticizing that which tries to take the place of God and defending the oppressed, the sweeping inclusivity of God's love, will form the ground, along with life experience, out of which new symbols and models will emerge. This theology building/weaving will be done in all arenas--the personal/individual, the group, the community, the institutional, and the ongoing historical. My conviction is that this theology making must never be set in radical discontinuity with the tradition but must always be set in that ongoing context.

The study reported here is an experiment in operationalizing this metaphorical, imagistic theology at both the individual and the group levels. The tradition is represented as context both by the spiritual histories of the participants and by my presence as a theologically trained representative of the Church. It is an experiment to see whether teaching women to engage in theology-making enhances their spirituality and their willingness to continue seeking in their faith (a

quest orientation to religion). Through self-report, primarily, women indicated whether or not they found meaning in developing new ways to connect with God, with their relationships, and with themselves.

The main instrument of teaching was that of psycho-imagination therapeutic techniques. In this process one can see how theology and psychology can operate together in mutually enhancing ways. In the image, by definition, all past images participate in forming the reality of the new image. In this, the participants' tradition is integrated with the potential for new images which facilitate and enhance new faith.

In the use of psycho-imagery for spiritual growth purposes, psychology and theology find common ground. As the participant reflects both on the nature of God's relationship to her and the world, and on her relationship to God, to her world, and to herself, both knowledge of self and knowledge of God are born. The context of this theology-forming has a worshipful element to it in its openness to God's presence and participation. If one distinguishes psychology and theology by either their focus of attention (knowledge of self or knowledge of God) or on source of inspiration (through human thought processes or by God's participation and revelation) then one sees in this process of open imagination to God and self, an integration of the two disciplines. The use of a psychological technique (imagery) to open one's self up to enhanced knowledge of God, is by no means unique to this study. But, the use of psycho-imagery to become open to an integration of knowledge of God and knowledge of self via a new, relevant and powerful image offers the possibility of the integration

between one's own efforts to find God and an openness to God's efforts to touch the person. From the self-reports of the group members, this even occurred in such a way that its consequences were not only powerful, but lasting. Learning to engage in this activity of theology-building or active spiritual quest provides an ongoing faith resource to people which is fluid, yet powerful.

This is the power of operationalized theology and it stands behind my theological and psychological assumptions throughout this study. As pastoral counseling is a paradigmatic example of the meeting between psychology and theology, so operationalizing theology in this way represents the effectiveness of that integration. And, using psycho-imagery techniques to address the issue of re-enlivening dead theological images, again shows common ground between the two fields.

Although theology and psychology must never be confused for one another, since each has its own area of focus, its own way of knowing, its own categories, and its own source of inspiration, it is a grave mistake to artificially separate them at their points of integration and shared influence.

With these words of warning, let us proceed to look at the issues and resources in the area of the psychology of women, found in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

The Psychology of Women, Past and Present
And The Contributions of Feminist Therapy

The issues that are being addressed by feminist theologians reflect a certain patriarchal world view that has been dominant throughout the Judeo-Christian theological traditions. That world view is by no means unique to theology. Although people like Rosemary Radford Ruether say that patriarchal oppression in the dominant world religions is probably paradigmatic to all forms of oppression, patriarchy has long-standing, deep-reaching roots in all areas of the Western culture. Consequently, it is no surprise to find that psychology is grounded in male-determined, male-valued, and male-controlled theory and practice. As Elizabeth Dodson-Gray says, in Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap, "Men have named and defined reality from their point of view, their standing point in the experience of life. The biblical account of Adam 'naming' the world and everything in it is a mythological account of a profoundly important truth in the sociology of our contemporary knowledge. We live in Adam's world, for men socially constructed the reality which has defined and controlled how people would perceive the world."¹

¹ Elizabeth Dodson-Gray, Patriarchy as a Conceptual Trap (Wellesley, MA: Roundtable Press, 1982), p. 49.

It is very important to recognize that what looks like reality is often deceptive because it often reflects only the male portion of the experience by which that reality is judged. When women's experience is also taken into account, then what has been taken for reality is generally shattered and replaced by a new reality. A benefit of the process is that we are generally not so eager to claim only one truth after having gone through this shattering. It is easier to see the relativity of "truths" and claim the plurality of human diversity after this kind of shattering experience.

At the same time we acknowledge that our reality has been male-defined and consequently, only partial at best, we must also remember that in the more recent myth of creation, in the first chapter of Genesis, God created both male and female persons as partners, both in the image of God, and there was no patriarchy as a norm. In these two creation myths, we have the two sides of reality. We have the current reality of a male-named and dominated world and we have the potential reality of a partnership where reality arises out of shared experience. The world named by males has been in existence for a long time. It seems that women have a lot of "naming" to do in order to catch up. But the vision for many feminists is that of shared naming. Through the work of feminist theologians and psychologists, the vision is moving closer to reality. However, in the meantime, it is important to continue to engage in the study of women's experience so that theories, theologies, and behaviors resulting from those, reflect a truer sense of the reality of our world.

In terms of psychology, this issue is articulated by Jill Raitt when she says, "A question arises. If there is to be a separate psychology of women, why not a psychology of men, too? The answer is that we already have a psychology of men, but it is simply called 'psychology.' The major theories have been developed by men, the subjects in most experiments have been men, and the model of human development has, in reality, been male development."²

This domination by the male point of view and its consequent distortion of the understanding of human personality and relationships will be explored as we look at some of the major theories that undergird modern psychology. We will begin with the theorists who orient their theories to the study of the individual psyche, and then move to those who take social interaction more seriously. It will become apparent as we explore these theories that there is more room to fit women into the theories that are social in nature. But even there it is a matter of "fitting in." In virtually all of the dominant psychological theories, women have been the "other" who had to be accounted for in terms of deviations from the norm (male). However, the belief that these theories comprise the understanding of the "human" personality is still strong today. Patriarchy still defines reality for most of the population.

² Jill Raitt, "Strictures and Structures: Relational Theology and A Woman's Contribution to Theological Conversation," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 50, no.1 (March 1982): 8.

After we explore the traditional psychological theories and their consequences for the psychology of women, we will look at the current status of the psychology of women, developed by women.

Debra Renee Kaufman points out there have been two major trends in feminist psychology, the "minimalist" and the "maximilist."³

The minimalists have attempted to demonstrate that there are few sex differences between men and women, and none that are relevant to day to day living and performance in the world. They have tried to discredit arguments that attempt to justify inequalities between men and women. The maximalists have focussed on the differences between men and women, re-defining what has been labeled feminine weakness, as women's strength. Both approaches exist in current feminist work in the psychology of women, although the minimalist focus emerged earlier in the theory-building and the maximalist thinking is a more recent focus. Theory is now being generated which draws from both extremes.

Finally, we will look at current approaches to feminist psychotherapy and the contributions that it offers to spiritual and psychological growth in women.

The question of how we know what we know about women's psychology must be raised. Feminist psychology, as feminist theology, grounds itself in the experience of women. Although much male psychology has come out of a more abstract type of theory-building, women consistently

³ Debra Renee Kaufman, "Women Who Return to Orthodox Judaism: A Feminist Analysis," Journal of Marriage and the Family 47, no.3 (August 1985): 545.

have little patience for that which is not grounded in experience. Abstraction tends to reflect what has been a psychological principal for male psychology (which we will discuss later): that of the self-in-separation. Women tend to operate out of a self-in-relationship starting place and consequently value concrete experience as the starting and ending place of psychological theory. An implication of this starting place is that women's theory building tends to look at context more than it does at traits.

Besides using experience and context as primary in understanding the psychology of women, feminist psychologists operate, to a certain extent, in reaction against male-oriented theories. This is not for the sake of simplistically believing in opposites or developing conflict for conflict's sake. Rather, it is to aid in breaking out of what Dodson-Gray calls the "conceptual trap of patriarchy." She says, "A conceptual trap is a trap because it doesn't fit the reality of what is. It was formulated when apparently you thought it fit reality but the reality has changed. Or, perhaps it never did fit and you just didn't know it."⁴

Because of the conceptual trap of patriarchy it is a constant effort to see through the male-defined reality to the possibility of other realities. Anne Wilson Schaef says that one of the myths of the White Male System is that it is the only system; that nothing exists

4 Dodson-Gray, Patriarchy As A Conceptual Trap, p. 113.

except its reality.⁵

The culture works against seeing reality in a pluralistic way as it also works against validating the reality of an oppressed group. For these reasons, vehicles to break through that resistance must be created. One of those vehicles is to work against that which claims to be the sole reality.

These are the primary ways in which knowledge about the psychology of women is approached. The main issue here, though, as it is in feminist theology, is to ground all theory in the first-hand experience of women. Lucie Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach say it most succinctly when they write, "It is through women's experience in society that an understanding of women must be sought: not, as it is usually taught, the other way around, whereby women's social roles are seen to flow naturally from women's psychology, a psychology which is invariably seen as determined by biology."⁶

The goal of women's psychology is to gain a more accurate understanding of women through their own life experiences rather than through the eyes of a group which has not had that experience. That group, male psychologists and researchers, has already developed a great

5 Anne Wilson Schaefer, Women's Reality: An Emerging System in the White Male Society, (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), p. 9.

6 Lucie Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach, Understanding Women: A Feminist Psychoanalytic Approach (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 7.

deal of theory about women which we will explore now.

Psychology, like theology, has a great deal of power. When psychology presents a world view, it tends to carry authority. Myths of women which have been in existence over history were taken in and made part of psychological theory and consequently, given scientific validity in a culture which values scientific truth. As we explore the work of Freud, Jung, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and others, it appears clear that the myths of women were starting points for them as they developed their theories. And, the theories reinforced the myths. They tended to see women within their own cultural, male-oriented biases and interpreted them accordingly. Out of that, theory developed. Very little of the theory was impacted by women's interpretation. There are some exceptions to this (e.g. Karen Horney's reinterpretation of Freud's penis envy as power envy) but primarily it is the male psychological interpretations which have gained power in the tradition and these have served to maintain the status quo of women. That status quo has been to keep women powerless, dependent, and nurturant. Naomi Weisstein writes about these theorists of psychology, saying, "These views from men who are assumed to be experts reflect, in a surprisingly transparent way, the cultural consensus. They not only assert that a woman is defined by her ability to attract men, but they see no alternative definitions. A woman's true nature is that of a happy servant."⁷

⁷ Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," in Women In Sexist Society eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: A Mentor Book, 1971), p. 208.

Sigmund Freud is probably the most influential theorist of psychology in modern times. Many of the concepts he developed in his psychological theories have become a part of day to day thinking. Ideas such as "Freudian slips" of language and having unconscious motives are almost household words. Unfortunately, Freud's understanding of male and female development have also been very influential over time. One of the primary problems in his theory is that he treated the male body and personality as the norm and found women's differences to be explainable only in terms of inferiority.

It is difficult to look objectively at Freudian concepts of the female. However, it is important that we do not discard psychoanalytic thought about women too quickly. It has had a powerful and long term influence in psychology in general.

Freudian thought (psychoanalysis) and neo-Freudian thought are all based on Freud's thinking in the area of "human" (male) development and the formation of the personality as a result of that development. It is important to summarize Freud's understanding of male and female development in order to understand the implications of his thinking on women's psychology.

According to Freud, children pass through certain psycho-sexual stages as they mature. The way they move through these stages determines how their personality develops. It is highly dependent on the biology and anatomy of the children. Each stage centers around an erogenous zone of the body where the body gets its greatest satisfaction during that period of time. The first stage is the oral in which the

greatest satisfaction is received through the mouth. The second stage is the anal stage where pleasure results from elimination functions. In terms of male and female differentiation, the first two stages are not terribly significant. In the phallic stage, however, important differences begin to take place. In the development of the boy, the phallic stage is the time when he receives pleasure from masturbation. According to Freud, it is after the boy's movement from the phallic stage to the Oedipal stage that sexual identity is impacted most strongly. In that stage, the boy wants the mother for himself as a sexual object. He associates her with the pleasure he receives from his masturbation. He also sees the father as a rival for the mother. At about the same time, he notices that his sister's sexual organs are different from his own and he associates this with her castration. He begins to fear his own castration and this motivates him to give up the mother to the dangerously stronger father and identify with him. His identity is strengthened and he grows to seek out a replacement for the mother when he becomes adult. The Oedipal complex is appropriately destroyed when he gives up the mother and the boy develops a strong superego along with his sexual identity.

Freud's ideas about female development derive from this normative understanding of the male's development. The children move through the first three stages in much the same way. However, in the phallic stage for the girl, who is also masturbating, wanting the mother for herself, and viewing the father as a rival, the girl notices her brother's penis and wants it. This "penis envy" moves her into the Oedipal stage in which she turns against her mother in shame at her own inadequate sexual

organs and anger at her mother for not creating her with the organs her brother has. This movement away from her mother creates a movement toward her father who has the envied penis. Her thoughts turn to eventual father substitution in order to get the desired penis through sexual intercourse and ultimately through a baby which is the ultimate penis substitution. Because there is no decisive way to destroy the Oedipal complex, the girl, according to Freud, develops a weak superego and a weak sexual identity.⁸

In order for a girl to develop her sexual identity she must go through three major changes that a boy does not have. She must stop masturbating with her "masculine" clitoris and change her sexual zone to the vagina. She must change from an active to a passive sexuality. She must change the gender of her object choice from her mother to her father.⁹

If she can accomplish this, then one of three things will happen. She will either turn her back on her sexuality and become frigid;

8 For further development on these themes, see Freud's three major works in female sexual development; "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," in The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 5, ed. J. Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p.186-97.; "Female Sexuality," in The Collected Papers, Vol. 5, p. 252-72.; and "Femininity," in New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, ed. J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965), p.112-135. For a summary of these themes I am indebted to Joanna Bunker Rohrbaugh, Women: Psychology's Puzzle (New York: Basic Books, 1979), p.86-88.

9 Rohrbaugh, Women: Psychology's Puzzle, p. 87.

develop a masculinity complex out of a continuing refusal to acknowledge that she doesn't have a penis; or she will develop a "normal feminine attitude" by acknowledging the inferiority of her sexual organs, switch to a passive sexuality, and wait for a man to give her the needed penis-baby. She does not develop a strong sexual identity, strong moral reasoning ability, or a strong superego. She does become physically vain and morally deficient in this process, according to Freud ("Femininity," 1933). However, this is normal for women.

The crucial factor in this developmental theory, then, is the male penis. With one, if development proceeds well, one becomes a male with a strong identity and the ability to do well in the world. Without one, no matter how well development proceeds, one can only be a female without a strong identity, without good judgment, plagued by vanity, and always dependent on males because they have the only valuable thing in life--the penis. This summary may sound like an overstatement of Freud, but it is accurate of Freudian understanding of how sexual identity works.

Research studies have been done challenging this view of development on a variety of bases. One of the most significant findings is that when children are in the phallic and oedipal ages, the key time for Freud's theory, they are unable to recognize and identify gender by genital characteristics.¹⁰

This finding, replicated in various ways, is the most damaging

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 99.

piece of evidence to Freudian understanding of sexual identity. Other findings include the fact that clitoral and vaginal orgasms in women are physiologically identical so that the change in sexual zone is not critical in women, and the findings that women are actually more comfortable in their bodies (rather than constantly envying the male body) than men are.¹¹

Neo-Freudians have recognized some of the problems with Freud's theories and have for the most part substituted power envy (following Karen Horney's lead) for penis envy. As Anne Wilson Schaef has said, "I have met very few women who really wish they had a penis. In general, women prefer that penises stay right where they are, attached to men. There is something men have that we would very much like to have, though: the birthright of innate superiority, the power and influence one inherits by being born male."¹²

In accord with this sentiment, neo-Freudians have tended to look at some of the social factors that influence female development. The issue of male power and dominance and the female's appropriate desire for that is central.

Karen Horney also talked about the male's envy of motherhood. She felt that the strength of the envy that men have for the woman's ability to give birth would cause them to find ways to balance the power by oppressing women. Margaret Mead also found womb envy in some of the

11 Ibid., p. 103.

12 Schaef, Women's Reality, p. 33.

cultures she studied. Neo-Freudians have attempted, then, to address some of the problems in Freud's theories by taking the cultural situation into account. However, they still focus primarily on body differences and instinctual drives to account for the Oedipal shifts in female and male development. Rohrbaugh says that the neo-Freudians have a problem. When they focus on the social factors as the motivation for sexual development they have trouble explaining why girls break the attachment to their mother and turn to the father. Children of that age certainly cannot associate the penis with symbolic power and when the argument of "transitory penis envy is used, they are faced with the research showing that children don't identify genitalia with gender at that age. On the other hand, if they use the psycho-sexual understanding of Freud to talk about the Oedipal shifts, they have to face the same criticisms leveled at Freudian theory. Rohrbaugh, in response to this problem, says, "Could social motivation be enough (to cause the Oedipal shift)?... This lacks the force of biological drives and hence is incompatible with the rest of the biologically based Freudian theory...We are once more left with male power--a social perception rather than a biological urge."¹³

Although Erik Erikson is considered a neo-Freudian, he is worth taking separately because of his influence in developmental theory. Erikson, like the other neo-Freudians, stays based in biological theory

¹³ Rohrbaugh, Women: Psychology's Puzzle, p. 115.

although he expands Freud's psycho-sexual stages into psycho-social stages. One of the central stages for his theory is that of identity, which occurs around adolescence. For a male adolescent, the identity quest occurs in preparation for intimate relationships. It is necessary for him to have a firm understanding of himself so that he does not lose himself in another when he forms an intimate relationship. For a woman, the pattern is different. Erikson states that a woman's identity is formed, in large part, around her biology. She has, what Erikson calls, an "inner space" which is designed to bear children. Erikson writes that women form identity only after they form their intimate relationship because their identity depends on the filling of their inner space. Erikson no longer focusses on women's lack of a penis. He focusses on her uterus and its emptiness until filled by her chosen man's child. He believes that women's reproductive function makes her dramatically different than men, orienting her passively towards nurturing children and interpersonal relationships. Men, on the other hand, because of their sexual nature, are oriented toward pushing toward the external world of objects.¹⁴

So, despite Erikson's extension of Freudian theory into the realm of social relationships and concerns, he still finds anatomy to be destiny for women. Women cannot find their true identity until they join a man and create children to fill her emptiness. Not only does

¹⁴ Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth, and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 112.

Erikson make this judgment about the appropriate identity quest for women, he does so by using the male body as the norm, again.

These psychological formulations are created in isolation from women's authentic experience and women play little part in the formulation of their psychology. Women are often told by authority figures who they must be. This is generally based on biology. Naomi Weisstein says, "Psychologists have set about describing the true nature of women with a certainty and a sense of their own infallibility rarely found in the secular world. (For example,) Bruno Bettelheim tells us that 'we must start with the realization that, as much as women want to be good scientists or engineers, they want first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and mothers.'"15

Let me briefly mention some of the other influential, foundational psychological theories. Carl Jung has often been welcomed to feminist thinking about psychology because he appreciates the feminine side of the human being in his psychological formulations. He valued the feminine principle of "eros." However, he did not appear to value women in the same way that he valued the feminine principle. He felt strongly that women should stay in their own sphere. Once women attempted to move into the realm of "logos" they were at a disadvantage and it was not helpful to them or to the culture. As Naomi Goldenberg says, "The whole idea of union with 'the feminine' seems to be a male fantasy. Jungians sidestep this by referring to the feminine in all of us, but

15 Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," p. 207.

the symbol does not fit the female experience as well as the male."¹⁶

In other words, Jung, as a male, wanted to embrace the stereotypically feminine qualities for men in order to facilitate their wholeness. The reverse was not developed as clearly nor taken as seriously. His concept of androgyny tends to maintain the status quo of stereotypically male and female characteristics. This supports dualistic thinking in its own way.

The above discussion constitutes a summary of the major influences in the Freudian and neo-Freudian theories of women's psychology. It certainly does not attempt to do justice to their theories as a whole but stays within the realm of gender identity and function. These theories have maintained a great deal of authority over time and still inform much of the clinical practice of psychotherapy. We will discuss the ramifications of that later in the chapter.

The cognitive-developmentalists have also been influential in women's psychology. This school of thought derived from the work of Jean Piaget. His major insight was that intellectual development required both biological maturation and interaction by the child with the environment. It was the dialogue between maturing internal structures and the world that caused development to take place. In this dialogue, patterns of relationships develop so that the child is able to think. The child goes through four cognitively-oriented stages; sensori-motor, pre-operational, concrete-operational, and formal

¹⁶ Naomi Goldenberg, "Feminism and Jungian Theory," Anima 3, no.2 (Spring, 1977): 16.

operational.

Lawrence Kohlberg, best known for his work in moral development, took Piagetian theory and applied it to the development of sex differences. He believes that boys and girls develop in basically the same way through the first two stages. In the first stage, children are not clear about gender and how it relates to themselves. By the second stage they are clear about their own gender but they think that it might change or that other people's gender could change. By the third stage, a child is clear about his or her own gender and generalizes that information to others. He or she knows that it will not change and, by around the age of six or seven, identifies genitalia with male or female people. This is the process of gender identity.

The next part of Kohlberg's theory is that of sex-typing. He believes that both boys and girls perceive that there are universal sexual stereotypes based on nongenital body images. He believes that boys are motivated to live out those universal male stereotypes out of their gender identity and girls are motivated to live out the universal female stereotypes out of their gender identity. The universal stereotypes are obviously quite different for males and for females and they arise from the nature of the male or female body.

Kohlberg says that boys find it easy to identify with the male stereotypes because their developing sense of prestige and power discrimination helps them to recognize that as males they are identifying with the powerful sex. However, females have more difficulty because they are aware they are not identifying with the most powerful sex. Consequently, they identify more with the father for a

few years. However, there comes a time when parental identification becomes important to both sexes and females identify with the mother.

Kohlberg says that although girls realize that it is not best to be a girl, there are two factors which help draw them towards their mother identification. One is that they realize that to get close to the members of the more powerful sex, they must act like mother which Kohlberg calls "complementary modeling." He also says that the girl sees that mother has some prestige which he calls "niceness." She chooses to identify with this.¹⁷

Joanna Rohrbaugh says that Kohlberg's arguments make sense up until the point where he tries to distinguish male and female sex typing based on biological stereotypes. Kohlberg, himself, has made the point that all children prefer to identify themselves with people who have power and prestige who are like themselves. However, Kohlberg also says that girls want to be like females whom Kohlberg says inherently lack power. What we end up with is a theory that fits males and is adapted to take girls into consideration as the "other." There have been studies done which indicate that children tend to side with whichever parent they perceive to be the most powerful so this also weakens Kohlberg's argument for female development. As with his work in moral development, where he uses 84 males followed over 20 years and then universalizes their results to all human moral development, Kohlberg has not developed

¹⁷ For a full discussion of this argument see E.E. Maccoby, ed. The Development of Sex Differences (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), pp. 82-173.

a theory from female experience or even one that fits female experience.¹⁸

Kohlberg's theory ends up sounding like Erikson's in that identity is based on biological determinism at the whole body level. Kohlberg's work in complementary modeling and "niceness" modeling are disproved by various experiments such as the one about modeling after the dominant parent regardless of the child's sex.

Michelle Fine notes that

researchers who write within a traditional psychological paradigm often describe the psychology of the individual "as if" it could be examined independent of political, economic, and social contexts; they describe women's psychologies, in particular, as biologically based, masochistic, involving personality disorders, or in presumably progressive circles, deriving from personal 'choices.' Feminist psychologists challenge these traditions and argue for research that connects psychological dynamics to the very economic, political and social contexts traditional psychology denies. They advocate a psychology that is contextually valid.¹⁹

Much of feminist psychologizing is based in the social learning theories so we will end this survey by taking a brief look at that theory. Joanna Rohrbaugh lists this to be one of the three major camps of psychological theory, along with psychoanalytic theory and cognitive theory. Social learning theory evolved out of behaviorism and out of concern for the socialization process. Social learning theorists

¹⁸ Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 13.

¹⁹ Michelle Fine, "Reflections on a Feminist Psychology of Women: Paradoxes and Prospects," Psychology of Women Quarterly 9 (June, 1985): 168.

believe that all who we are and all that we do is learned. We learn those things for which we are rewarded or for which we see other people rewarded. We avoid doing those things for which we are punished. This general theory explains sex roles within this framework. In other words, we learn how to behave in "male" or "female" ways based on how we are rewarded and punished by those close to us and by the culture at large.

In contrast to the other kinds of personality theories we have looked at thus far, social learning theory does not base who we are in our biology in any way. It suggests that from the time of birth little girls are rewarded for one kind of behavior and little boys are rewarded for a different sort. One of the main tenets of learning theory is that people are able to generalize from a specific learning experience to a broader spectrum of behaviors. Consequently, whole patterns of behavior can be learned thoroughly and as a cluster. The implication is that without significant motivation in the form of observed or promised rewards, it would be difficult to change from the behaviors that have been rewarded by the culture over our histories.

Girls and boys do not just imitate their same sex parent. Instead, they seem to observe the relationships between parents (and other significant relationships) and learn from that observation. They then perform out of that knowledge based on their perceptions of what will be rewarded. Girls, according to this theory, perform differently towards anticipated rewards than boys would despite the fact that they have learned the same things. Their performances are based on different reward criteria. Learning comes from observing parents, other important

people, peers, institutional behavior, and symbolic modeling through television and other media.

Experimenters in learning theory have done studies with hermaphrodites which indicate that gender identity is primarily learned rather than biologically given. People with mixed sexual characteristics, assigned erroneously to one sex or the other, have great difficulty changing to the biologically correct sex even after only eighteen months of age. These studies are important in understanding the power of social learning.

Learning theory takes seriously the idea that the culture plays a large part in the development of our identities and our feelings about ourselves. Gender itself plays a large part, maybe even the primary role, in how we see ourselves throughout our lives, especially in a culture as thoroughly patriarchal as ours. A problem with social learning theory is that it doesn't adequately explain what motivation women might have to refuse to adjust to a culture that rewards them for behavior that is self-destructive. Victor Drapela asks the question,

Does a well-adjusted person simply match his or her behavior with the norms of appropriateness setup within his or her culture? Does it follow that an individual is maladjusted when she or he disregards societal norms... a well adjusted person perceives him or herself as striving towards self-fulfillment. The goal is not conformity but personal adequacy. If he or she appears socially adjusted, his or her attitude toward society is an outgrowth of the process toward self-enhancement from within.²⁰

This kind of statement, which echoes our intuitive knowledge, is

²⁰ Victor J. Drapela, "Personality Adjustment and Religious Growth," Journal of Religion and Health (June 1982): 87.

not well explained within social learning theory. Although the theory helps us with making sense out of how we have gotten to where we are, it doesn't seem to have the capacity to speak to internal images generated out of a hope for a future which is not reflected in any way in the current culture. Women are seeking new ways to be in the world, at great personal cost, (high punishment, low rewards) because they have images of a future free of patriarchy. To understand this, we have to look elsewhere.

Jean Baker Miller talks about the necessity of conflict or at least the willingness to engage in conflict. She feels that women have been taught, in the way oppressed groups typically are taught, to suppress conflict and to submit rather than participate in strife. She says,

As women seek self-definition and self-determination, they will, perforce, illuminate on a broad new scale, the existence of conflict as a basic process of existence. As long as women were used in a massive attempt to suppress certain fundamental human conflicts, the basic process of conflict itself remained obscure. As women move out of that position, conflict can become known and therefore available for more appropriate attention -- with much greater hope of eventually understanding our minds. That is, women are not creating conflict; they are exposing the fact that conflict exists.²¹

Again, this kind of dynamic is not explained well by social learning theory. So, despite the grounding of much feminist theory in social learning principles, women must go beyond the theory into the complexity of motives and needs and relationships that make up the images of

²¹ Jean Baker Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), p. 126.

liberation.

As a way of introducing the consequences to women's mental health, and of completing our survey, it will be helpful to look at the societal system, itself, within which women strive for wholeness. Anne Wilson Schaef's analysis of the differences between the dominant system (which she labels as the White Male System) and the system women, non-white, non-western people find more relevant/meaningful (which she labels the Female System) is comprehensive. She grounds the analysis in her experience of working with women as a therapist and as a researcher. I find her analysis to be valid in my own clinical experience with women so let me summarize Schaef's findings.

She begins with the assumption that the White Male System (WMS) is one system of reality, not reality itself. The problem is that both men and women live as if it were the reality instead of one option. (This sounds much like the problem with the collapsed metaphor of God who is the Father). Since we live in this WMS as if it were reality, women, who do not fit well in the system, feel as if they have few options for living out their own potential. This is an accurate perception when the WMS is seen as all that there is. Women's differences, when viewed within the WMS, become deviance rather than difference. And, as Hester Eisenstein points out, "It is not difference within itself that has been dangerous to women and other oppressed groups, but the political uses to which the idea of difference has been put. The defining of difference has traditionally been linked to the exercise of power, to those who

have been in a position to say who is different."²²

Because women believe that the WMS is the only reality, they seek their identity from that culture. They believe that this is the only way. As Schaef says, "There is a direct correlaton between buying into the WMS and surviving in our culture."²³

Because the WMS is not consistent with the authentic reality of women, the identity that women develop is not their own. It is the one defined by the dominant, male culture. This dominant system, according to Schaef, has four primary myths that feed it and one implied myth.

The four myths are:

1. The WMS is the only thing that exists.
2. The WMS is innately superior.
3. The WMS knows and understands everything.
4. It is possible to be totally logical, rational and objective.

The fifth myth, which is derived from the other four, states that it is possible to be God.²⁴

Schaef draws a number of comparisons between the White Male System and the Female System. These are difficult to summarize because they cover several different dimensions. However, in brief, the WMS tends to

22 Kaufman, "Women Who Return to Orthodox Judaism," p. 550.

23 Schaef, Women's Reality, p. 5.

24 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

be quantitative, hierarchical, self-centered, ritualistic, rule oriented, absolute, linear, logical, majority-ruled, and analytical. On the other hand, the female-system is processive, egalitarian, relational, verbal/imagistic, developmental, facilitative, freedom-oriented, multi-dimensional, balanced, bridging, responsive/responsible, and synthesizing. Schaef, in the foreword to her book, summarizes the systems by saying, "The Female System is variable and changing. It is an open-ended system. The White Male System, on the other hand, is a closed system. It is logical to expect that as sex-roles change and become clearer, persons of both sexes will get better at understanding and respecting both systems."²⁵

I think what Schaef is saying here is that as women gain more power in the culture, men will have to respect and validate the way that women find meaning in the world and in themselves. As women talk together and find that they share a common reality that differs from the WMS, they will begin to give it credence. From that starting place, it will gain respect in the culture as a whole. Of course, this is a fairly optimistic belief given the current reality. Schaef makes the point in Women's Reality that women already understand the WMS because they have had to understand it in order to survive within it.

As Jean Baker Miller notes, "Subordinates know much more about the dominants than vice versa. They have to. The mysterious gifts of feminine intuition are in fact skills, developed through long practice,

²⁵ Ibid., p. ix.

in reading many small signals - verbal and non-verbal. Subordinates also often know more about the dominants than they know about themselves."²⁶

Because women put so much psychic energy into knowing the dominant system, they have spent very little time in learning about themselves. They have accepted the labels given to them by the dominant system and have attempted to fit themselves into those definitions. Since dualistic thinking is basic to the dominant system, where one must be either superior or inferior, women have been labeled inferior and have accepted that label. They have been limited in self definition, they have been limited in the roles they could play in the culture, they have been limited in their being able to value themselves.

A widely quoted study done early in the 1970's by Pauline Bart focussed on hospitalized women who had been admitted for depression. Bart found that most of these women were the "supermoms" who had become depressed when their mothering role had been lost or curtailed for a variety of reasons. Her exploration was into why the role loss was so destructive for them (in contrast to the father who had lost his fathering role in the same experience). Bart found that self-esteem is highly dependent on the important roles that one plays in life. For men and women, these roles are primarily determined by the social structure. For women, the roles defined as important by the social structure are those of wife and mother. Bart notes that, consequently, the loss of

26 Jean Baker Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women, p. 10.

either of these roles might easily result in a loss of self-esteem. She goes on to say, "Since mental health or a feeling of well-being is dependent on a positive self-concept, it is therefore dependent on the role felt to be available to the individual."²⁷

Since the primary roles available to the woman are those of wife and mother, self-concept is limited to performance in those areas. If that role is lost or not done well, women's self-concept is destroyed and serious depression can result. Not only is the limitation to a single role a serious problem, but it is a role which is thoroughly dependent on others. As Bart goes on to say, "If one's satisfaction, one's sense of worth, comes from other people rather than one's own accomplishments, one is left with an empty shell instead of a self when such people depart. On the other hand, if a woman's sense of worth comes from her own accomplishments, she is not so vulnerable to breakdown when significant others leave."²⁸

So, as psychologists have traditionally defined women by their reproductive biology and derived their appropriate social role from that, they have condemned women to this loss experience: loss not only of the significant people in their lives, but of their self-esteem at the same time. This is only one of the significant consequences of

²⁷ Pauline B. Bart, "Depression in Middle-Aged Women," in Women in Sexist Society, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Mentor Books, 1971), p. 173.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

traditional psychological theories of women in a male dominated culture. It is important for us to look at those consequences in order to develop new psychologies derived out of women's experiences of wholeness. As Joanna Rohrbaugh says, "Although the male role is also relevant to mental health, traditional masculinity is not as detrimental to a man's health as traditional femininity is to a woman's."²⁹

There have been many, many studies done showing that men and women, when put into experimental situations with clearly defined expectations, perform in very similar ways. In the field of recent experimental psychology, it has been shown that men's and women's psychologies are much more similar than they are different. It is curious as to why the myths about women's biologically determined psychological differences remain so prominent in our culture. Rohrbaugh responds to this problem by writing, "Why has the female always been defined in male terms? The answer can be expressed in one word: power. Since males are viewed as more powerful, females are automatically viewed as passive, dependent, and even somewhat helpless. In the traditional theories of personality development, maleness is equated with power."³⁰

Consequently, the power belongs to men. The myths about women's psychology continue so that the male power can continue to be justified. Women's wholeness is sacrificed.

Jean Baker Miller talks about this in terms of the permanent

²⁹ Rohrbaugh, Women: Psychology's Puzzle, p. 395.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 463.

inequality between the two sexes which is foundational in our culture. She says, "It follows that subordinates are described in terms of, and encouraged to develop, personal psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the dominant group--qualities more like children than adults. If subordinates adopt these characteristics, they are considered well-adjusted."³¹

But that obviously puts women in a double bind. They are told that by virtue of their biology their central role in life is to give birth to and nurture other people. Then they are told in all sorts of ways that this role is not terribly valuable. (They are not paid for it; people who perform similar services in the employment world are paid minimally for these nurturing services; the characteristics which make women good nurturers do not translate out of the home into the world in any valuable way; etc.) Consequently, women are unable to feel good about themselves at a deep level. In order to avoid facing the reality of this, they identify with the male system and "borrow" feelings of worth from the powerful males with whom they identify. However, if Bart is right that mental health is dependent on strong feelings of self-worth, then women are, individually and collectively, at high risk to experience psychopathology or mental distress.

A complicating factor in all of this is that women have been taught to distrust other women. As Schaef says, "Since we are trained to dislike and distrust one another we often find it difficult to support

31 Jean Baker Miller, Toward a New Psychology of Women, p. 7.

one another's efforts. We do not stop there. We actively set about trying to destroy our competition. Some believe that there is not enough room at the top for too many successful women, so others of us will just have to be kicked down the ladder again."³²

This competition between women seems to arise out of the belief that there is so little power available to women, they can't afford to share it with other women. And that little bit of power is borrowed in the first place. Besides the competition between women, another thing that keeps women apart is the lack of role models they find in each other. Women, in order to find models of self-esteem and mental health, have to turn to males. As Jean Baker Miller says, in talking about a client,

Nothing in her upbringing or in society encouraged her to act on her own behalf or build a sense of her own effectiveness. Like some other women, she once said, 'If only I had had a glimpse of that as a possibility for me.' The problem was that Jane saw only one alternative to the helpless, dependent person, the person she dreaded being. That was the totally strong, self-sufficient person who was freed forever from weakness or neediness, and, most of all, from the effects of other people. It was, in short, her image of a man. Men, she thought, could be immune to these dreaded feelings. But the slightest hint of being like a man was, of course, totally unacceptable.³³

If being like a male, who can develop strong self-esteem is

32 Schaef, Women's Reality, p. 42.

33 Schaef, Women's Reality, p. 103.

unacceptable, and being like a woman is unacceptable because it carries with it low self-esteem, what choices do women have?

In a sense, we have a case of circular reasoning which maintains an unhealthy status quo. First of all, theories about women's psychology are developed by males, out of a male-dominant culture, using male subjects. This, in turn, leads to a definition of women as deviant to males in terms of their development and their personality psychologies. The difference/deviance gets defined as inferior in the dualistic thinking of this male-dominated culture. Women, defining themselves in relationship to the only set of options, recognize their inferiority or at least their limits and do not develop strong self-esteem. This leads to a lower level of mental health which gets defined in terms of women's inferiority which then justifies the theories out of which the inferiority-definitions emerged. This does not seem to be a very productive system for a culture in which more than half of its population is defined in these ways.

Lucie Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach write, "The feminist analysis of women's psychology shows the enormous extent to which their actions and feelings have been concentrated on trying to cope with society's rules about what and who women should be. The development of a new understanding of women's experiences and women's psychology rests on bringing into bold relief exactly what these rules are."³⁴ They go on to articulate those rules which go, for the most part,

34 Eichenbaum and Orbach, Understanding Women, p. 7.

unarticulated in our culture. They are:

1. Women must defer to others (and in doing this they learn to hide their desires from themselves);
2. A woman must always be connected to a man (and in doing this they lose themselves);
3. A woman must have emotional antennae in order to anticipate and care for others' needs (and in doing this they carry their own deep feelings of neediness). This, according to Eichenbaum and Orbach, is the psychological consequence of the traditional psychological theories and consequent social roles of women today. It becomes clear why women's psychology developed by women in touch with women's experience needs so badly to be done.

In order for women to have the courage to begin to reformulate a new psychology for themselves, they must first of all, learn to not be afraid to bond with other women. Women need to hear and respect each other's stories so that they can hear and respect their own. In hearing each other's stories they can learn to hear the common experiences and recognize the falsity of the system into which they have been indoctrinated. At that point, women may be able to see that the qualities that have been defined for them as weaknesses are really strengths. The very things that women have tried to avoid in themselves in order to gain approval from the dominant culture, like feelings and intuition and affiliation needs, can be claimed as valuable. And, in learning to value themselves, women will have the courage to experiment with new realities in which they have options for real wholeness.

Mary Ballou and Nancy Gabalac have written a book which outlines a

feminist understanding of mental health. In that book they state four principles that operate in the development of women's psychological theory as done by women. The first and foremost of those principles is that theory and model building in women's psychology should be based on the experience of women. This is a critical corrective to most of the earlier work done in the psychology of women. The second principle is the emphasis on intra- and inter-disciplinary research. Women prefer to look at the whole picture instead of looking at its parts.

Consequently, women's psychology done by women looks at women and their experience from all different perspectives and allows the totality of those perspectives to give birth to the theories. The third principle is that there is a commitment to changing the oppression of women in its multitudinous forms. In other words, women's psychology of women does not claim to be neutral in character. It is actively on the side of women and their wholeness. It is, in that respect, a political theory as well as a psychological theory. Artificial distinctions are not made between categories. Social oppression and psychological oppression are part of the same whole. The final principle is that theory building in the psychology of women done by women takes a critical stance toward the assumptions, dogmas, and practices of traditional psychology. Any theory which has enabled or maintained the oppression of women in the culture, needs to be held suspect in the process of building new theory. This does not mean that all traditional theory about psychology and psychotherapy are discarded without selectivity. It does mean, however, that all of the assumptions behind those theories, as

well as the theories themselves, should be regarded with suspicion.³⁵

Ballou and Gabalac also define the three principles of feminist psychology/therapy that are held in common with feminist philosophy. The first is that women as a gender and, with few exceptions, as individuals have less social, political, and economic power than men. This imbalance accounts for the inferior status of women. Second, women's pathology is fundamentally caused by external, not internal sources. And, third, women must attain both economic and psychological autonomy.³⁶

Again, one can see the flavor of feminist psychology and theology as being involved in the experience and the benefit of women. They both tend to focus on the whole system, politically, economically, socially, relationally, internally, and so on, in understanding the make up of women. All of these factors are taken seriously in trying to understand the needs and the "pathology" of women.

Theory building takes several forms out of this common ground. Some theorists revisit some of the traditional psychologies of women to discover what is salvageable from them. For example, Carol Christ and Naomi Goldenberg have used Jungian thought as a starting place for their thinking. They both critique Jung in this process and draw from him.

³⁵ Mary Ballou and Nancy W. Gabalac, A Feminist Position on Mental Health (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1985), p. 57.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 24.

With Jung, feminist theorists are cautious about his separation of the feminine principle from the persons of women and about his tendency to maintain cultural stereotypes of men and women. On the other hand, they tend to appreciate his concept of androgyny as a starting point although most feminists now feel that the dialectical nature of androgyny should be kept in mind.

Erik Erikson's thought is also sometimes used as a starting place for revision and rebuilding by feminist psychologists. For example, Anne Wilson Schaef reclaims Erikson's concept of the inner space of women and redefines it out of women's real experience. She talks about women's empty space, which is located closer to the solar plexus, as existing because women have never had the opportunity to define themselves. She says that as women take that challenge, to define themselves out of their own experience, they will fill the empty space within them.

Carol Gilligan uses Kohlberg's theory as a starting place and, through her own research, draws the conclusion that men experience their world from the perspective of the self-in-separation because of their developmental experience and women view the world from the vantage point of self-in-relationship. This theory, as well as the two that draw from Jung and Erikson, are examples of using traditional theory as beginning points. Women also start in sociological theory, political theory and economic theory to develop pictures of women's psychology in context.

The contextual nature of the research is central to all the work in a feminist psychology of women. Michelle Fine writes,

By connecting psychology to a social context, feminist

psychologists have exposed the ways in which prevailing ideologies about gender are reproduced as "objective facts," have applied psychology to social problems long experienced and privatized by women and long neglected by science, and have articulated models of social change that incorporate analyses of political, economic, and social structures as they affect women's individual and group psychologies.³⁷

Therefore, women's psychology developed by feminists never defines identity in isolation. Women are understood in their long term rootedness in a culture which has been oppressive to them. Rather than being blamed for being inferior as the traditional anatomically-oriented theories have done, these psychologies of women place the blame on the patriarchal culture and attempt to make sense of women's experience by taking that into consideration.

In preparation for a discussion of the contributions of feminist therapy, it is interesting to look at how Ballou and Gabalac define both an unhealthy and a healthy woman. The traits of an unhealthy woman according to these authors are she:

1. Does not have a woman's identity;
2. Distorts and questions the validity of her own perceptions;
3. Denies her own needs;
4. Is dependent and unable to act on her own behalf;
5. Cannot get support from others;
6. Cannot decode contaminated data;
7. Believes internalized images, roles and options shaped by the

³⁷ Fine, "Reflections on a Feminist Psychology of Women: Paradoxes and Prospects," p. 168.

power system.

In contrast, they define the healthy woman as:

1. Experiences herself as a woman with a woman's identity;
2. Is open to data from herself and others;
3. Is capable of processing data;
4. Is capable of making decisions;
5. Is capable of making judgments;
6. Is aware of and uses her power;
7. Is knowledgeable about herself, her needs, her goals, and ways

of gathering support;

8. Has commitments that allow her to challenge and change that which can be changed in herself and environment and learns to survive what cannot be changed.³⁸

With these very helpful analyses let us turn to examining feminist methods of psychotherapy.

First of all, there are two distinct types of psychotherapy to be considered here. One of those, non-sexist psychotherapy, is appropriate with everyone in any situation regardless of degree of pathology, sex of client, and counseling goals. The other, feminist therapy, may not be appropriate in certain cases. It is clearly a therapy for women, but other restrictions for its use may apply, too.

Non-sexist therapy, like feminist therapy, operates out of an understanding of the full worth of women. It uses techniques and theory

38 Ballou and Gabalac, A Feminist Position On Mental Health, p. 76.

that do not contribute to the oppression of women and it sees women's "pathology" in the context of the pervasive cultural oppression. Non-sexist therapy hears and respects the experience of the client and determines therapy goals in dialogue with the client. The relationship between the client and the therapist is egalitarian. The therapist resists being in the power or one-up position. The therapist is the "expert" about the therapy procedure but the client is the "expert" about her (or his) own needs. There is at least as much emphasis on the present and the future, in non-sexist therapy, as upon the past, because one of the goals is to help people make choices about living their lives.

Non-sexist counseling has not been a predominant approach within the field of psychotherapy. The well known study by Broverman et al., done in 1970, indicated that both men and women therapists understood healthy women in categories which were different than those of healthy men/healthy humans. In that study, seventy-nine clinicians of a variety of backgrounds and training were sent questionnaires concerning how they defined mental health. There were forty-six male and thirty-three female clinicians polled through this 122 item questionnaire. They were to indicate with a number of personality characteristics which pole of these paired characteristics would be closer to a 'mature, healthy, socially-competent adult.' One third of the clinicians had the above statement on their instructions, one third had the word male substituted for adult, and one third had the word female substituted for adult. Broverman found that both male and female clinicians described healthy males and healthy adults in the same ways. However, healthy women were

described much differently with a heavier emphasis on qualities such as submissive, less independent, less adventurous, less aggressive, less competitive, more easily influenced, etc. Consequently, therapists treated female clients differently and developed different counseling goals than they did with males.³⁹

This was the situation in 1970. There have been other studies replicating the Broverman research. In 1975 Brown and Hellinger surveyed 274 psychiatrists, psychiatric residents, psychologists, social workers, and psychiatric nurses. They found that there was a greater problem with male therapists than female therapists. The female therapists had more egalitarian, contemporary views of women than did male therapists. In 1978, Sherman, Koufacos, and Kenworthy, using a "Therapists Information About Women" questionnaire, found that male therapists had a stronger negative bias about women than female therapists. They also found that 38% of the factual items about women were missed by more than 50% of the therapists, both male and female. There have been several other studies, finding for the most part, that both male and female therapists, but especially male, are more likely to treat women clients differently from men clients. They generally find women more passive and less healthy than men clients and they set lower therapeutic expectations for them.⁴⁰

39 Rohrbaugh, Women:Psychology's Puzzle, p. 424.

40 Helen V. Collier, Counseling Women:A Guide for Therapists (New York: Free Press, 1982), pp. 28-29.

One of the requirements in non-sexist psychotherapy is that the therapist perceives women as capable of the same kind of health and wholeness of which they perceive men to be.

In addition to the non-sexist attitudes and understandings of the therapist in non-sexist psychotherapy, the theoretical/technical approach to the counseling must be non-sexist. This may be even more difficult than the first requirement. It seems to require, at this point in time, that the therapist be somewhat eclectic, combining relevant and helpful aspects of certain theories and techniques into a new integrative whole. As we have seen in our review of the traditional psychologies of women, much of the foundation of those theories are grounded in the biological inferiority of women. Consequently, those theories cannot be used to ground non-sexist approaches to the psychology and psychotherapy of women. For example, as Rohrbaugh says, "We still cannot have a non-sexist psychoanalysis. Specific psychoanalytic techniques based on Freud's concept of the unconscious are amenable to a non-sexist therapy, but psychoanalysis per se is wedded to the broader theoretical framework of the psychosexual stages (and penis envy). Without psychosexual stages there can be no psychoanalytic interpretations of symptoms and illnesses."⁴¹

In addition to these limitations, psychoanalytic theory is based on an understanding of the human personality as a closed system of drives

41 Rohrbaugh, Women: Psychology's Puzzle, p. 437.

and instincts in conflict with the culture. This limits the possibility of a flexible dialogue between context and individual. For these reasons, psychoanalysis is not a potentially useful theory for non-sexist counseling. Other, biologically based, traditional theories of women have similar difficulties. Consequently, non-sexist psychotherapists need to be flexible and eclectic as they seek to find an integrative theory of women's psychology.

Feminist theory and therapy includes all the characteristics of non-sexist theory and therapy, but in addition, it has a strong element of advocacy and political involvement. In other words, as was stated above, feminist theory is not neutral. It intentionally stands in an advocacy role with women and encourages their ability to impact an oppressive system and maintain a strong identity and autonomy in the face of that system. Feminist therapy is a radical alternative to traditional mental health options. In fact, one of its central themes is the critique of traditional mental health options.

In addition to the goals that feminist therapy shares with nonsexist therapy, it also seeks to facilitate the development of power in women and to decrease women's dependency. In place of dependency, feminist therapy attempts to help women develop a healthy balance of autonomy and interdependency. A further goal is to help women find ways to impact the social, political, and economic inequities that exist in the culture. This process is accomplished in a variety of ways but always includes some element of women sharing their stories with one another.

Edna Rawlings and Diane Carter describe their perception of the

shared elements of feminist therapy. They involve the belief that:

1. The inferior status of women is due to their having less political and economic power than men;
2. Middle- or upper-class clients are not more valuable than working class clients;
3. The primary source of women's pathology is social and not personal;
4. The focus on environmental stress as a major source of pathology is not used as a means to avoid taking responsibility for one's life in the world;
5. Personal adjustment to the prevailing social conditions is unhealthy so the goal is social and political change;
6. Other women are not the enemy;
7. Men are not the enemy although, since they gain more benefits from the culture, they cannot be expected to help in changing it;
8. Women must be economically and psychologically autonomous;
9. Relationships of friendship, love, and marriage should be equal in personal power;
10. Major differences between appropriate sex role behaviors must disappear so that there is avoidance of sex-role expectations and stereotyping.⁴²

These elements of feminist therapy are claimed to one degree or

⁴² Edna Rawlings and Diane Carter, eds., Psychotherapy for Women: Treatment Toward Equality (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1977), pp. 116-120.

another in all feminist approaches. However, they are acted out differently by different therapists. Because of the need for eclecticism at this point (and probably indefinitely) in the theory building of feminist psychology and psychotherapy, it is difficult to summarize the therapeutic approach that feminist therapists take when working with women. Although they all embrace the theoretical assumptions of feminist philosophy/theory, they develop it differently for the purpose of therapy. In order to give a flavor of what these approaches are like, I will briefly summarize three such approaches.

The first of these emerges out of Anne Wilson Schaef's study of the White Male and Female Systems. She calls her approach, Process Therapy, and it begins in the assumption that the therapist must have a thorough knowledge of both the Female System and the White Male System. The therapy follows by beginning in an affirmation and confirmation of the client's experience. Schaef says that a woman must never be talked out of her experience nor her perceptions of that experience. Timing is crucial. The therapist must follow along at the client's pace and follow her process. In fact, process is much more important than content at this point in therapy. The therapist attempts to model affirmation and acceptance which the client will hopefully apply to herself by herself. Relaxation techniques and body work are an important part of this kind of therapy. Schaef feels that women know a great deal about healing themselves if they are encouraged to do that. At some point in the therapy the woman will experience her rage. The therapist must not be afraid of this rage and must provide a safe and trustworthy environment within which the client may experience and

express it. During this part of the therapy the client is encouraged to express blame and to acknowledge that she has been a victim because these are appropriate perceptions.

As the client moves through her rage, she is able to begin to explore the White Male system and see herself in relation to that system. She is encouraged to become a part of a women's group at that point so that similar and diverse stories can be shared and validated. Women can see that they are not abandoned when they share their rage. Out of this experience women can begin to see themselves as they are, to form strong identities, and to explore options for their future. This is the path that process therapy takes in Schaefer's system and it is designed to enhance the dialogue between self and system.⁴³

Another system of feminist psychotherapy comes out of work done by Mary Ballou and Nancy Gabalac. They feel that the struggles in women's mental health emerge out of their lifelong process of, what they call, "harmful adaptation." This is the process that women experience throughout life as they are encouraged and forced to adapt to the expectations and demands of the dominant system. This adaptation is accomplished through a five step cultural dynamic. The first stage is that of humiliation--the experience of being reduced to a lowered position in one's own and others' perceptions. Second is that of inculcation which is the process of being taught "correct" behavior. The third step is retribution where one is threatened if correct

43 Schaefer, Women's Reality, pp. 88-96.

behavior is not practiced. The fourth part of the process is conversion where a woman begins to accept the dominant system's reality as her own. This results in distorted perception. The final stage is that of conscription. This is the time when women become spokespersons for the dominant system. This five-step process, according to Ballou and Gabalac, is the base out of which women's mental health distress emerges. Their therapeutic response to this is to develop a corresponding five step corrective process which address and "undoes" to a certain extent what harmful adaptation has created:

The first corrective procedure is that of separation. In this step women's self discovery is encouraged and she is taught to recognize and study the process of harmful adaptation. The second step is validation where a woman is enabled to validate her own thoughts and feelings even when they do not fit all that she has been taught by the dominant system. In this, she is able to begin to develop an identity. The third step is called association. Women are encouraged to bond with other women and, in that kind of community, to hear each others' experiences. This serves to give women confidence that their experiences are valid and worthy of notice. When women hear their own experiences echoed back, they are able to believe in their reality which is distinct from the dominant reality. In the fourth stage, authorization, women are encouraged to be their own authority figures and to articulate their own goals out of their own strengths. And, in the final corrective stage, that of negotiation, women are encouraged to interact with the dominant system on their own behalfs, meeting their own needs and goals in resistance to the culture's attempts to draw them

back into harmful adaptation. They learn how to withdraw from the system, if there is need, in order to protect themselves and their identity and power. This process makes up Ballou's and Gabalac's system of feminist psychotherapy. They also have five maintenance stages which help women to maintain their mental health primarily by seeking and gaining the support and encouragement of other women who have engaged in the same successful search. These groups also have more power to ultimately affect the social, political, and economic inequities of the culture.⁴⁴

Although these two therapies operate out of somewhat different perspectives, their similarities are very clear. Both work in a dialogical way between the realities of the cultural oppression and the reality of the woman's internal perceptions, feelings, and experience. Out of this dialogue and encouragement, change occurs.

Jean Shinoda Bolen has developed a somewhat different approach. Although it also shares the assumptions and principles of feminist therapy, it emerges out of her study of Greek and Roman mythology and the myths that undergirded the formation of their pantheon of gods and goddesses. She uses the different goddesses, primarily from the classical period, as identity vehicles for women as they seek to understand themselves. She finds that the greek goddesses had very different sets of characteristics and that women have these various

44 Ballou and Gabalac, A Feminist Approach, p. 99.

clusters inside themselves. It is in being able to balance those different sides of themselves, that health emerges. She feels that often people let one of those sides become dominant and their lives become unbalanced. In this revised Jungian approach, Bolen focusses mostly on the internal dynamics of women. However, she does take into consideration that women live in an oppressive culture. She writes,

The Greek goddesses also lived, as we do, in a patriarchal society. Male gods ruled over the earth, heavens, ocean, and underworld. Each independent goddess adapted to this reality in her own way: by separating from men, joining men as one of them, or withdrawing inward. Each goddess who valued a particular relationship was vulnerable and relatively weak in comparison to male gods who could deny her what she wanted and overpower her. Thus, the goddesses represent patterns that reflect life in a patriarchal culture.⁴⁵

The benefit of this creative psychology for women seems primarily to be in its ability to help women understand themselves in relation to the culture they live in. It does not add very much to the options for changing that culture except in developing new, more integrative images based on the image of the pre-Olympian Great Goddess. The real value that I find in this work is left unspoken by Bolen. That is that the multiplicity of images help a woman to see her many sides and her many options and by linking that to an image of the divine, she empowers her and validates her experience at a cosmic level.

Because Bolen's work does not deal with the politics of change in any depth, it may fall more into the category of non-sexist theorizing

⁴⁵ Jean Shiroda Bolen, Goddesses in Everywoman: A New Psychology of Women (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), p. 23.

rather than feminist work.

The question of who is appropriate for feminist therapy is important. As stated earlier, non-sexist therapy is appropriate for all clients. But feminist therapy has a political component that should never be imposed on a client who is not ready for that. Only with a woman who has become aware of the oppressiveness of the culture she lives in and how that affects her life should feminist therapy be the theoretical approach. Sometimes non-sexist counseling, in its emphasis on encouraging and validating women in their experience, will facilitate a woman's self-understanding to a point where she would benefit from feminist therapy. But this needs to emerge out of the process. It should never be an imposed agenda for non-sexist counseling.

My own approach to feminist therapy is grounded in the feminist assumptions listed above and takes seriously the pervasive patriarchy of the culture. A second assumption that I make, that not all feminist therapists make, is that women have to live in that culture. Even if they withdraw into women's communities, their thinking, their histories, their relationships have all emerged from the culture and carry it along to one extent or another. And, for the vast majority of women, withdrawal from the culture is not a viable option.

In terms of a specific approach, I find that the field of image formation and image therapy is very valuable for women who are seeking to define strong self-images, as well as seeking new cultural images and new images for God and for their spiritual realities. As stated in chapter two, images have an integrative character so that, in addition to being able to carry one's history, they are able to "imagine" into

the present and future so that options for integration emerge. This process will be more fully defined in the next chapter.

However, let me say here, that I believe that the psychology of women, as well as women's own self-understanding, has been deeply affected and influenced by the cultural, patriarchal images. Consequently, in developing a healthier psychology of women, the question of the primary images of and for women is central. In working with women in pastoral counseling, it is their imagery of themselves and of their world on which I focus. This involves exploration into how those images were formed and rewarded (and how those images which were punished by family or culture were lost) over the woman's history. It also involves how she imagines herself in the present and future. Exploring critical relationships and how they have informed self and world imagery provides important diagnostic information as well as assisting in the strengthening of the client's image-making skills. It also raises to the level of consciousness, the material which will be a resource for the woman as she begins to form new, more whole and healthy, images for herself, for the world, and for God. She brings her personal and societal history, therefore, into this process of creating new imagery. Nothing is lost; rather, it is refamed in the forming of new integrations which provide energy and strength in the woman's life. Since much of women's "pathology" comes from the unhealthy and oppressive images formed in this patriarchal culture, imagery therapy helps women to add images which put the oppressive ones in perspective. This gives her the freedom to get more in touch with her own resources and her own potential.

In developing a psychology of and for women, as in the development of a theology of and for women, it is essential that women's wholeness and their potential for equal contribution to society be affirmed. Only in that affirmation can the whole human population and the creation of which it is a part move toward its own wholeness. Patriarchy divides and lessens. The wholeness essential to women's psychology and theology embraces and enlarges. It is an important model and an important contribution to the human process.

CHAPTER 4
Imagery Therapy as an Integrative Approach
To Theology and Psychology

Webster's dictionary has a dozen definitions for the noun "image." It has another eight for the verb "to image." Add in the several more definitions for the words "imagery" and "imagination" and one begins to see the difficulty in trying to make sense out of the psychological meaning of psycho-imagination work. Part of the problem is reflected in the quantity of dictionary definitions. Because mental imagery is an internal, private process, it is difficult to define or assess. One has to rely primarily on one's own experience and the verbal (usually) reports of others' experiences. Some people define mental imagery as a mental picture or as a duplicate of the external world. Others see mental imagery as pure imagination through which to provide an alternate reality. Other people think of mental imagery as a distorted perception of reality. Still others really don't think that mental imagery exists at all.

Webster's opts for a primary definition of mental imagery as "a mental picture of something not actually present" as its central understanding. The other definitions do not specifically refer to the mental use of imagery. Many researchers in the field of mental imagery have also chosen to use the "picture replica" definition of mental

imagery. However, current thinking is moving in the direction of seeing mental imagery as more than just an internal structure to stand for something else. Mental imagery is now beginning to be seen as an experiential reality which serves to bring together the several dimensions of thinking into a unified whole. In this respect, then, mental images can play a role in the experience of novelty, providing new options for ways of being. The research is still divided, though, in debate over the exact nature of the imagery process.

Part of the problem, as Ann Roe discovered in her research into the personalities of people in various professions, is that while biologists and physicists tend to be visualizers, in tune with their mental imagery, anthropologists and psychologists tend to be verbalizers.¹

This means that the very people who are studying imagery tend not to use their own imagery abilities as their first choice in investigations. And, people who do tend to use imagery a great deal in experimenting and investigating, do not tend to be verbal in recording that. Consequently, their research isn't as available. Although research also indicates that verbal and visualizing skills work together in imagery, Roe is proposing that certain types emphasize one side of that unity.

In this chapter, we will attempt to define and make sense of the concept of mental imagery, particularly as it relates to the practice of psychotherapy. We will look at the history of thinking in psychology

¹ Robert Sommer, The Mind's Eye: Imagery In Everyday Life (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978), p. 46.

about imagery and its ups and downs in academic favor. Current research in imagery and the theories and techniques that have emerged out of that will also be explored. Some applications of these understandings will then be investigated in relation to the concept of God imagery. Finally, we will look at the potential integrative nature of imagery therapy in the psychology and spirituality of women.

To start with, any formulated definition of imagery raises a variety of research issues because the primary controversies in the field of imagery center around its definition. Alan Richardson, well respected in the research of imagery, proposes that "mental imagery refers to all those quasi-sensory or quasi-perceptual experiences of which we are self-consciously aware and which exist for us in the absence of those stimulus conditions that are known to produce genuine sensory or perceptual counterparts and which may be expected to have different consequences than their sensory or perceptual counterparts."² Compare this definition with that of Mardi Jon Horowitz which is, "Any thought representation that has a sensory quality, we call an image...it most often has a visual quality."³

Although the definitions around the field of imagery is as broad as this comparison indicates, this quote is not quite fair to Horowitz. He, himself, is profoundly aware of the complexity of imagery. He

² Alan Richardson, Mental Imagery (New York: Springer Publishing, 1969), p. 3.

³ Mardi Jon Horowitz, Image Formation in Psychotherapy (New York: Jason Aronson, 1983), p. 3.

completes his definition here by saying "images are not merely imitations but memory fragments, reconstructions, re-interpretations, and symbols that stand for objects, feelings, or ideas."⁴

As we will see when we explore the research, almost every element in these two definitions is debated. Is imagery quasi-perceptual or a perceptual experience in and of itself? Are we always aware of our images? Do images have a different impact on us than the experience of an external object would? (The behaviorists, who use systematic desensitization, for example, might argue that the internal and external representations of phobia stimuli have the same consequences). Do images stand for "objects, feelings or ideas" or are they an integration of all three? These questions, and others, raised from these two seemingly straightforward definitions are very active in research endeavors. We will find that the formation of psychotherapeutic techniques depend, in large measure, on which side of the debates one rests.

The obvious implication of the research is that imagery is worth taking seriously. This has not always been the case. Imagery was ignored for an extended period of time during the rise of behavioristic psychology. However, at this point in time, many psychologists feel that imagery is the very basis of our thought processes. The fact that research has indicated that imagistic thinking was developmentally available before verbal thinking has significant implications for depth

4 Ibid., p. 3.

techniques in psychotherapy. Many memories are stored in images and are not available through "talking therapies." Imagery is also seen as being important as a universal experience among humans. We appear to use imagery as an innate, universal way of processing information.

Imagery operates in processing personal historical information, in working with current information, and in projecting toward future information. The future orientation of imagery tends to be called imagination. Imagination also reflects the creation of information which is not based upon external representation. In other words, imagery--past, present and future--which has not or does not have an external stimulus would be called imagination. Joseph Shorr, the founder of Psycho-Imagination Therapy, states that, "Human imagination is as infinite as the universe: it knows no bounds, has no limitations. The awareness of discovered imagination is awesome, even more awesome are those discoveries which have yet to be revealed beyond existing frontiers."⁵

These kinds of statements are echoed throughout the literature indicating the value that psychologists are beginning to place on imagery and imagination in the psychology and psychotherapeutic fields. There are some general agreements in the experimental and descriptive literature which we can summarize. First of all, there is agreement that imagery can be more than visual. It can, and often does, involve

⁵ Joseph E. Shorr, Psychotherapy Through Imagination, 2nd ed. (New York: Thieme-Stratton, 1983), p. 255.

any of the perceptual senses. Second, it is agreed that mental imagery is an internal experience without current external stimulation of an identical nature. In other words, if a person was seeing a lampshade in their mind while looking at a lampshade in the room, that would not be considered mental imagery as such, but rather the natural process of sensory perception. A third area of agreement is that mental imagery exists developmentally before language and therefore is the vehicle for early childhood memories. There is majority agreement in two other areas. Those are, first, that images are more than simply an exact replica of an external stimulus in that they have certain other qualities by virtue of being internalized. What those qualities are is debated. Second, imagery has a symbolic quality or a metaphorical quality to it in that it stands for something else and participates in some way in that, and yet is different from that for which it stands, too. The awareness of the symbolic quality of the image, most people feel, changes the way they relate to the initial stimulus. These areas of agreement and the areas of difference will be explored later in the chapter.

In addition to the various models of images and imagery, there are a variety of types of images. It is important to look at these types in some detail as certain areas of research apply to some of them and not to others. Also, in the practice of psychotherapy, different types of images are used for different purposes.

In a general sense there are first of all spontaneous imagery and induced imagery. Spontaneous imagery is that which arises within a person unbidden by intentional act. This imagery appears to carry with

it more affect than induced imagery and is often called intuition at the feeling level. These images tend to relate to our fundamental needs and can bring conflicts, hopes, desires, and so on, to our awareness.

Induced imagery, on the other hand, is that which we create in response to a stimulus of some kind. It can be in response to a suggestion from inside or outside of ourselves. It can be in response to a sensory perception. It can be as part of an intentional problem-solving process. Frequently, there are dimensions of spontaneous imagery within induced imagery. This is what makes induced imagery potentially so successful in psychotherapeutic settings. Induced imagery can tap into spontaneous imagery.

In a more detailed sense, there are a variety of types of images which fall into four generalized categories. The first group is of images categorized by vividness. Included in this group are hallucinations, pseudohallucinations, thought images, and unconscious images. Although these all fall into one category, they are very different types. In hallucinations, one believes that the image is not internal, but external, whereas in pseudohallucinations, one knows that the image is internal but it seems external. Thought images and unconscious images are self-explanatory. The second grouping is of images categorized by context. These include hypnagogic/hypnopompic images, dream or nightmare images, and psychedelic images. These, as indicated by the title, are images defined by where or how they happen. Hypnagogic images are those experienced in the "twilight" right before sleep and hypnopompic are those right before waking. Dream or nightmare images occur in the process of sleep, and psychedelic images occur under

the influence of chemicals. Third, are images categorized by interaction with perceptions. These include illusions, perceptual distortions, déjà vu, negative hallucinations, and after images. Illusions refer to a mistaken image and perceptual distortions are images which distort the reality they are representing. Déjà vu is the imagery experience of re-enacting a previous experience or image. Negative hallucinations have to do with not forming a mental image of a present external object. And, an after image is the lingering perceptual image after the external stimuli is removed, as in seeing light spots after having a flash picture taken. The last grouping is that of images categorized by content. These include memory images/eidetic images, imaginary images, body images, phantom limb experience, paranormal hallucination, and imaginary companion images. This group of images all have to do with what the image contains within it. For example, the phantom limb is the sensory/feeling image of a missing body limb. A paranormal hallucination is an image of a non-present spiritual figure. An eidetic image will be explained more fully later but it is a memory image which is clear, persistent, repeatable, and able to be scanned. These categories, provided in Horowitz's book on image formation, are helpful in that they show the range of possibility for the process of imagery formation. We will be focussing primarily on the images of the fourth category, specifically the memory/eidetic images and the imaginary images.⁶

In terms of the psychotherapeutic applicability of images, there

6 Horowitz, Image Formation and Psychotherapy, p. 6.

are at least as many options for those which have been validated by research, as there are options for types of images. Some of those applications are relaxation and biofeedback, treatment of phobias, training in enhancement of imagery capacities, self-awareness, coping with pain, changing moods, changing unwanted habits, improved sexual expression, enhancing athletic skills, self-entertainment, self-control, decision-making, creativity, and spiritual development.⁷ Some of these functions will be elaborated later in the chapter.

Imagery has only begun to be reappreciated in the last 20 years. It is important to look at the history of thinking about imagery and use of imagery in psychotherapy in order to get a sense of its roots. The new emphasis on imagery has gone in two directions: one is that of the laboratory and experimental design and the other is the counseling room with clinical applications and resulting theory building. Both have had significant impacts on the field.

Imagery and visualization have always been recognized. Cave pictures from 50,000 B.C. show representations of what cave people had seen. It appears that images were information processing functions and communication vehicles before the development of language. This was true over time in our history and is also true within each person developmentally. A well-known quote from Aristotle which says, "The soul...never thinks without a mental picture," indicates that even these

⁷ Many of these are listed by Jerome Singer, "Towards the Scientific Study of Imagination," in Imagery: Theoretical and Clinical Applications, Volume 3 (New York: Plenum Press, 1983), pp. 3-28.

early philosophers took imagination and imagery seriously. In the 1700's Gottfried Leibniz wrote about imagination as a bipolar experience saying that it was a means through which people related to the external environment and it was a way that a person related to him or herself (self-consciousness). This anticipated Jung's similar formulation. Imagination was certainly embraced in the 19th century by the romantic poets and, through them, re-emerged in that century as an intellectual concern.

It was in the 19th century that Sir Francis Galton, an English psychiatrist, formulated the theory that there is more than one mode of thought. He suggested that there were two primary modes, visualization and verbalization. The visualizer thinks in images and the verbalizer thinks in words, according to this formulation. He felt that people were either one or the other. Galton developed a projective test in order to determine whether one was a visualizer or verbalizer. This test also measures the creative uses of imagery one may be capable of. The test is still used for certain experiments today.

Psychologists like William James and Edward Titchener, in the late 19th century and the early 20th, believed that the image was a fundamental concept in psychology. Like Galton, they focussed a great deal of research onto its characteristics. Titchener developed the structuralist school of thought in which imagery was foundational. However, in America, the behaviorist school was taking hold, led by John Watson, and they became focussed on the process of the scientific methodology practiced in the physical sciences. In their eagerness to turn psychology into a "hard science" they sacrificed the realities of

psychology which were not external and visible. The study of imagery and imagination became discredited and redefined. Watson, in particular, worked to translate internal, mental events into behavioral terms. He called imagery and thinking, subvocal speech, finding methods to detect small movements of the throat and tongue during thinking. Introspection was dismissed as unmeasurable and therefore irrelevant. Despite the fact that this psychological emphasis left out a great deal of human experience that even the behaviorists must have intuitively known to be valuable, the study of mental imagery was ignored for many years in America. As Mike and Nancy Samuels point out, "Psychology under Watson's leadership became the science of behavior rather than the study of inner processes. In the United States psychology became so overwhelmingly behaviorist-oriented that virtually no further works were published on mental imagery for fifty years."⁸

It is amusing that the resurgence of interest in imagery was in part led by the behaviorists as they developed its use for certain behavioral therapies (e.g. implosive therapy, systematic desensitization, aversive conditioning).

In Europe, a different path was being followed. Freud, particularly in his early psychological research, took imagery very seriously. In his early work in free association he would place his hands on the patient's forehead and ask the patient to share any images that came to his or her mind. However, he abandoned imagery in favor of

⁸ Mike Samuels and Nancy Samuels, Seeing with the Mind's Eye: The History, Techniques, and Uses of Visualization (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 34.

words fairly early. After a while, Freud viewed imagery as a function which attempts to deal with unsatisfied wishes. Images, in the form of fantasy, provided a new reality that satisfied the wish and replaced, then, the unhappy reality. Even in dreaming Freud felt that the images were attempts to resolve conflicts between instinct and reality. Most psychoanalytic thought since Freud has followed this lead.

Joseph Shorr describes this tendency, writing,

Historically the psychoanalysts have not been kind to the function of images which may spontaneously emerge in the course of psychoanalysis. They have labeled such imagery as manifestations of regression or resistance; images like symbols, they say, are defenses and pose an alternative to the verbalization and ideation of the ego....(in this line of reasoning) images defend against revealing the unconscious conflicts and lead to decreased communication.⁹

Both Shorr and Horowitz feel that psychoanalysts are beginning, at this point, to pay more attention to the processes of the imagination as important diagnostic and treatment phenomena.

In terms of his approach to imagery, Jung is an exception of these followers of psychoanalysis. He developed a process which he called active imagination which he valued as a positive therapy experience. Jung's active imagination was not geared toward the exploration of memories, as Freud's work had been. It was focussed on the imaginative and creative growth process. Jung worked to help people connect with their personal images as well as with the images of the collective

9 Shorr, Psychotherapy Through Imagery, p. 258.

unconscious which he felt were universal. In this, people could find greater depth and meaning in their lives. Jung's active imagination techniques provided a basis for many of the imagery techniques used today.

There was less of a gap in the European study of imagery than there was in the American study. Many followed clearly in Jung's footsteps in their development of techniques for therapy. In America, however, the disregard of imagery continued from around 1910 until the late 1960's.

Jerome Singer has spent much of his energy on researching meditative states, daydream thinking, and imagery. As a pioneer in the field, he feels that imagery regained a place of importance in psychology for several specific reasons. He says, "The shift can be attributed to:

1. Hebb's work on neuropsychology and research on sensory deprivation and self-generated imagery;
2. The emergence of information theories and computer methods which facilitated an understanding of the complex associational networks and reconstructive process of human thought;
3. Important advances in the study of sleep and dreaming;
4. The body of research on hypnosis;
5. The emergence of cognitive psychology in the 1960's;
6. Silvan Tomkin's work regarding affect imagery and consciousness;
7. His own research on daydreaming and its relation to other thought forms;

8. The widespread use of a variety of image and fantasy techniques in a variety of therapy approaches."¹⁰

Other theorists agree with this analysis and often place a great deal of emphasis on the rise of the cognitive psychologies as a major factor. Piaget, as the founder of cognitive psychology, took imagery very seriously. He found them to be of two primary kinds. One was reproductive imagery in which the child (in his studies he was looking at preoperational functions of imagery here) represents events in order to predict outcome. They are primarily one-sided reasoning. The other kind was anticipatory imagery (which required operational thinking) in which the individual could represent internally, potential changes in context in which events occur. He felt that both imagery and verbal skills were necessary and parallel in early development, but imagery becomes an auxiliary function in later development.¹¹

One of Piaget's greatest contributions in terms of understanding imagery was his concept of the dialogue between the internal image and the external reality. His understanding of the accommodation and assimilation processes, in which the image is foundational, conveys this dialogical process in which the image impacts reality and the reality impacts the image. Cognitive psychology took seriously the role of imagery in consciousness. However, it did tend to think in linear,

¹⁰ Jerome Singer, "Towards the Scientific Study of Imagination," p. 9.

¹¹ James K. Morrison and Michael S. Cometa, "A Cognitive, Reconstructive Approach to the Psychotherapeutic Use of Imagery," Journal of Mental Imagery, 4, no.1 (Spring, 1980): 36.

measurable ways about that process. Newer forms of "cognitive" psychology tend to combine conation (the will), and affect (feeling) to cognition in theory building.

According to David Marks, a leading experimental psychologist in the field of imagery,

The revival of imagery came in the early 1970's after the new cognitive psychology was well along, with the controversies over imagery sparked by Pylyshyn's review in 1973. His rejection of the image as representational of, or analagous to, perceptual experience ('pictures in the mind') in favor of an abstract linguistic or propositional interpretation sparked a controversy that has persisted ever since between what Dennett called the iconophiles (who liked the representational position) and the iconophobes (who were against it, in favor of something else).¹²

This controversy, along with others, has set the tone for experimental research in imagery psychology, it seems. Before we look at the current theories and therapies of image psychology, it is important to examine briefly some of those controversies.

In most of the literature which explores the experimental side of mental imagery, the researchers begin with an acknowledgement of the difficulty in exploring the phenomenon of imagery. There are several difficulties in investigating the structure and function of the image. First of all, the phenomenological approach is the primary method of information gathering. In this method of investigation an experimenter always has to deal with the problem of differences in an individual's perception of his or her own experience. But with imagery there is no

¹² David F. Marks, ed., Theories of Image Formation (New York: Brandon House, 1986), preface.

field of comparison. When people are asked to evaluate the vividness or intensity of their own imagery, they have no external scale with which to evaluate the answer. Mental imagery is a very personal and individualistic experience for the most part. The experimenter is reliant on direct observation of the "subject." Consequently, "subjectivity" is the norm. In order to counterbalance this, many experimenters have become reactionary and devoted their energies to devising measurable, but rather abstract, experiments in order to test some of the properties of the image. This approach takes imagery out of the context in which it is relevant and thereby changes the very nature of the experience. Most recently, experimenters have become somewhat more comfortable with letting the study of imagery be creative, synthetic, and experiential (e.g. D.F. Marks and A. Ahsen).

Another difficulty with researching the phenomenon of mental imagery has to do with the nature of the relationship between the experimenter and the subject. In all experimental designs the influence of the experimenter over the results of the experiments has long been recognized. Even when it seems impossible that the experimenter can have any impact on the results, studies indicate that if the experimenter has any expectation of the results, that somehow gets translated to the subjects. In the nature of imagery study, which is subjective and based on self-reports, this is a particular danger. In addition, there is no way to measure whether the subject is following the experimental instructions because they are primarily carried out inside the mind of that subject. These are complications to be taken into consideration in evaluating the experimental literature.

It becomes obvious in looking at the literature that as experimenters explore various aspects of image structure and function, they often are comparing apples and oranges. With the variety of types of images, we cannot assume that the structure and function of each of them is identical to the others. It seems that the assumption that there is a common understanding and use of language between experimenters is not helpful.

Despite these difficulties, it is clear that each experimenter is convinced that there is some inherent value in images/imagery and its relation to cognition (defined broadly) that makes it worth studying. As Kirk Strosahl and James Ascough say, "Clinical experience suggests that there is something distinctive about imagery as a form of cognition that cannot be duplicated by verbal processes but one is pressed to identify what these distinctive elements are."¹³

The importance of imagery is not only that it seems to work powerfully in psychotherapy, but it seems crucial to one's understanding of the process of thinking and making sense of the world. One of the most powerful characteristics of the image is its autonomy. Even in the process of induced imagery, an image takes on a life of its own, tapping into knowledge and perceptions through a non-linear, non-intellectual route. This process can only partially be controlled and, experiencing an autonomous image can have a profound affect on the imager. This

¹³ Kirk Strosahl and James C. Ascough, "A Multiple Component Model of Clinical Imagery," in Imagery Volume 2: Concepts, Results, and Applications, ed. Eric Klinger (New York: Plenum Press, 1980), p. 259.

characteristic and its powerful impact helps us to see the importance of taking the image seriously. Some experimenters even believe that the image is the foundation of all other forms of mental processes. James Fowler, best known for his work in faith development, says that he believes that virtually all of our knowing begins with images and that most of what we know is stored in images. If this is true, and imagery has been ignored as central to the human experience, then we must look carefully at whatever information can be generated to help us in understanding imagery, the imager, and imagination itself.

The two most central research controversies focus on: (1) the structure of the image, and (2) the function of the image. We will look at some of the literature in both of those areas. In doing this we must ask the question, "What does research have to tell us about the image?"

One of the difficulties in this research seems to be the need to collapse models into truths. In other words, researchers tend to look for the one theory or model that fully explains the nature of imagery. This does not seem possible. It may be that the field of imagery will have to content itself with more than one model of the image. At this point in time, however, the struggle has been more for the correct model.

There are several primary models under debate in the literature. The first, chronologically, is the analog model or the understanding of the image as a picture in the mind. This model was initiated by Francis Galton (mentioned above) in the late 1800's. Its primary role at that time was in seeing how the image represented external objects that were no longer present by re-creating them in detail in the mind. He

developed an instrument which began by asking people to image their breakfast table that morning, as a way of measuring people's ability to image. This model has stayed in the field as a viable approach for some researchers. However, the resurgence of interest in imagery came with Pylyshyn's critique of the picture model in favor of a propositional model. In other words, the image was now a means of processing information through cognition rather than merely a representation of a previously experienced stimulus. Certain researchers attempt to bridge between these two models. Stephen Kosslyn has attempted to do that by distinguishing between the "medium" and the "message" in imagery. The medium can be plausibly represented by the picture model, he feels, but the message being processed by the image can be talked about in terms of the propositional model.¹⁴

John Anderson responds to Kosslyn by saying that he is still using picture language and that this may be an appropriate model for imagery. Anderson believes that more than one model may be necessary in describing the imagery process. He made this observation in 1978 but the debate has continued between the different models.¹⁵

The primary criticism of the picture model is that it cannot

14 Stephen Michael Kosslyn, "The Medium and The Message In Mental Imagery: A Theory," Psychological Review 88, no.1 (1981), pp. 44-66.

15 John R. Anderson, "Arguments Concerning Representations for Mental Imagery," Psychological Review 85, no.4 (July, 1978): 249-277.

explain the meaning which people attach to imagery. Not only is meaning not explained, but the variety of information made available in an image is not explained. Donald Meichenbaum feels that the picture model certainly cannot explain the effectiveness of the image used in psychotherapy towards change. He feels that imagery therapy changes the client's world and the picture model is not a vehicle which can explain that phenomenon. The photograph model of imagery has been maintained partially out of a commitment to scientific parsimony but, as many researchers point out, the price of parsimony is too high when the model will not explain significant phenomena within the imagery experience.¹⁶

Allen Paivio attempted to again present a bridging model between picture and propositional models when he proposed the dual code theory of imagery. He felt that there are two types of information representations, the visual and the verbal. The visual provided the structure, to a certain extent, and the verbal provided the interpretation and meaning. He feels these operate in a parallel way and both are needed for optimal functioning. There are other researchers who agree with Paivio, feeling that this model explains the deficiencies of the picture model.¹⁷

Akhter Ahsen, one of the leaders of the research into the structure

16 Donald Meichenbaum, "Why Does Using Imagery In Psychotherapy Lead To Change?" in The Power of Human Imagination: New Methods In Psychotherapy, eds. Jerome L. Singer and Kenneth S. Pope (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), p. 390.

17 Anderson, "Arguments Concerning Representations for Mental Imagery," p. 261.

and the therapeutic uses of imagery, disagrees with Paivio. He is concerned that in the effort to find a theory that explains and in some way integrates the cognitive functions of both imagistic and verbal modes, appreciation of the particular power of the image will be lost again. He says, about Paivio's dual code theory, that it doesn't "appreciate that the verbal descriptions of an image do not enjoy a parallel relationship with the image and that existence of covert imagery in the split reference disrupts any possibility of strict parallelism."¹⁸

In other words, Ahsen thinks that images underly the process even in the verbal mode. This thinking, shared by others such as Jerome Singer and Kirk Strosahl, has led to a multi-component model. These theories find that the image is both a "copy and an original." Ahsen says, that we must "keep in mind the reality demand as well as the fact that reality simply cannot be admitted into the mind except on the ground rules that operate in the mental sphere. Mind is its own reality but it also dialogues with the outside reality. In this sense every mental image is implicitly a reconciled double image, which gives the single mental image the status of a metaphor under the rules."¹⁹

The multi-component models take a variety of forms but they all acknowledge the complexity of the processes underlying the image.

¹⁸ Akhter Ahsen, "Image Psychology and the Empirical Method," in Theories of Image Formation, ed. David F. Marks (New York: Brandon House, 1986), p. 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

Jerome Singer comments, "In general, it seems clear that imaginal activity is a complex blend of receptive-perceptual processes and efferent activity. Imaginal activity can be conditioned under certain circumstances; it can show some of the properties of skill learning; it is responsive to motivation; but it also has some properties of passive receptivity."²⁰

The complexity that this quote acknowledges, in terms of the image, is typical for the multi-component theorists. As Kirk Strosahl and James Ascoug summarize,

The multiple component model has two major characteristics. The clinical images are composites of multiple representational events, ranging in complexity from reproductive molecular imagery (parts) to constructive molar imagery (whole pictures). Second, the visual and verbal systems co-represent and share processing responsibility for incoming information throughout the imagery sequence.²¹

I find the multiple component model most helpful in my understanding of imagery in that it fits personal and clinical experience. Because of this, it is useful to examine Ahkter Ahsen's model more closely as it is probably the most thorough in its development. His model is developed under the rubric of the new structuralism.

David F. Marks, who has worked closely with Ahsen, in the development of the New Structuralism, says that the paradigm for this

²⁰ Jerome L. Singer, "Towards the Scientific Study of Imagination," p. 49.

²¹ Strosahl and Ascoug, "A Multiple Component Model of Clinical Imagery," p. 261.

theory,

assumes that images are neither purely mental nor purely physical, but that they are both. The structure of the image, including the experiential, somatic and semantic features, contain the essential information on the individual's psychological development. The structural theory of image formation assumes Ahsen's triple code model of images which takes the form of 1) a quasi-perceptual experience occurring in consciousness: Image (I); 2) a psycho-physiological component: Somatic Response (S); and 3) an interpretation, or meaning, in the verbal-semantic system: Meaning (M). The triple ISM code is normally present for all imagery, all the time. Images are never free of associated emotions and thoughts and, like movements of the body, they are, at the same moment, both a stimulus and a response.²²

With this understanding, then, every image combines one's entire psychological past as well as the novelty of the current experience. Memory and imagination participate together in the image. Clearly, then, images cannot just be pictures. They are integrative experiences which distill the essence of past, present, and future in the action of an image. Each image is also, then, a summary of many situations and experiences, which creates the mental context for the imaginative component of the image. The exploration of images within this paradigm intentionally defines itself as subjective. It seeks as much self-report as possible in an effort to be clear about this internal psychological context for the imagery. The method of research and therapy is introspection. Within this understanding of the new structuralist theory, Ahsen places his research on the eidetic image. He defines the eidetic as,

²² David F. Marks, "Toward A New Structural Theory of Image Formation," Theories of Image Formation, ed. David F. Marks (New York: Brandon House, 1986), p. 252.

a normal subjective visual image which is experienced with pronounced vividness: although not necessarily evoked at the time of the experience by an actual external object, and not necessarily dependent on a previous experience of an actual situation, it is 'seen' inside the mind ...this seeing is accompanied by certain somatic events as well as a feeling of meaning; the total experience in all its dimensions excludes the possibility that it is pathological.²³

The eidetic image is stable, vivid, and can be scanned by the imager. Consequently, it is not equivalent with an imagination image. It relies on a past event rather than anticipating a future one. However, despite its stability, one can make some adjustments to it and it is in this capacity that Ahsen has developed an eidetic psychotherapy. We will look at that more fully when we explore the practice of image psychotherapy in general.

A variety of therapy types have either used imagery techniques within them or have been developed almost exclusively around the practice of imagery work. It would be a mistake to categorically divide the image therapies from the talking therapies. As we have seen in the definition of imagery (Ahsen's New Structuralism) which we will be using, images have both a visual and an interpretive dimension and "seeing" and "talking" as well as feeling, intuiting, and sensing are all part of the process. In that sense, all therapies have elements of talking and imaging processes. Having said that, I will summarize some of the therapies that use imagery techniques as either an adjunct technique to more verbally-oriented practice or who use imagery more covertly in the verbal work. We will then look at some of the

²³ Akhter Ahsen, "Eidetics: An Overview," Journal of Mental Imagery 1, no.1 (Spring, 1977), p. 6.

specifically imagery-oriented therapies that use imagination in one form or another as their prime techniques.

As we have pointed out, Jungian therapy included a strong imagery component with its emphasis on personal and collective images/archetypes. Jung's active imagination therapy is still in use among Jungians and others. In it, the person is encouraged to take a symbol and make it dynamic. There is movement and process involved and out of the process, new images and symbols emerge. Those are then interpreted in the therapeutic dialogue and insight is hopefully gained. Many of the European mental imagery techniques and therapies have followed the model offered by Jung.

Gestalt therapy uses many imagination techniques in their emphasis on the here and now in therapy. They are used primarily in conjunction with the dreams of the client in terms of ongoing self-understanding. They are rarely used in an attempt to make sense of personal history because that is not the emphasis of the therapy.

Psychodrama also uses imagery and it does have an investment in using it for past, present, and future orientations. However, there is little systematic reflection on imagery and its uses. It is seen as one technique among many to accomplish the purpose of coming to grips with one's current life struggles.

Psychosynthesis, as developed by Roberto Assagioli attempts to use techniques both of the "Western" school of thought and of the "Eastern." In other words, both problem-solving and spiritual/transcendent growth are goals of the therapy. Imagery and meditation techniques are used heavily in the self-realization stage which occurs after a level of

basic health is reached. As Robert Somer describes it, in psychosynthesis "the therapist uses spontaneous daydreams and sleep dreams to identify specific problems, and then controlled visualization to direct messages back into the unconscious."²⁴

Again, although psychosynthesis involves considerable use of imagery, it is the technique that is focussed on rather than a systematic theory of imagery use.

Psycho-Imagination therapy, developed by Joseph Shorr was one of the early psychotherapies that focussed entirely on the diagnostic and therapeutic uses of imagery. He developed his theory out of a neo-Freudian background which tends to emphasize the interaction between the therapist and the client. He uses a variety of methods within the theory to elicit repressed emotion and to provide a sense of cognitive clarity about the conflicts in which his clients are involved. It is derived from the European school of imagery work and from his understanding of projective technique. Shorr uses sentence-completion type imagery stimulations as well as projecting imagery forward in time, and putting the self in an imaginary situation. These techniques are used to help the client focus on changing his or her self-definition and to resolve unconscious conflicts. The neo-Freudian theory of unconscious conflict undergirds his work with imagery.

Jerome Singer, another American who has done pioneering work in imagery work, has developed what he calls Daydream Methods for

²⁴ Somer, The Mind's Eye, p. 159.

psychotherapy. The therapist guides the client in an imagery situation in which dialogue takes place. The therapist can and does intervene in imagery in order to promote certain ideas or possibilities within the client. Thus, the client is steered in the direction of his or her problems through the guided imagery and the options for solving those problems come primarily from within the client's psychological resources. His theory underlying his use of these daydream methods focuses on his understanding of the human as an information-processing creature who "steers the way through a complex and tricky physical and social environment. Following Tomkins, I would propose that the range of our emotions depends to a great degree upon how well we can match each novel, social, or physical environment to our already established sets of expectations or plans or to the hierarchy of our current concerns."²⁵

Singer began in a psychoanalytic frame but because of the closed energy system model of psychoanalysis with dreams and images being the products of instinctual wishes leaking out of the control of the superego, this theoretical frame did not make sense to him. Hence, he moved to the information processing model. He sees that daydreaming and imagery can be of both positive and negative value to the client and uses that viewpoint in structured interviews in psychotherapy to assist client growth and adjustment.

²⁵ Jerome L. Singer, "Navigating the Stream of Consciousness: Research in Daydreaming and Related Inner Experience," American Psychologist 30, no.7 (July, 1975), p. 733.

One of the psychotherapeutic schools based on imagery that I find most helpful is that of Hanscarl Leuner. His method is called Guided Affective Imagery and it is derived out of the European model of imagery therapy, particularly modeled on Desoille's style of minimally interpreted symbolic work with imagery. Guided Affective Imagery is usually quite vivid and has an autonomous quality. Because of these qualities, the client tends to become emotionally involved in the process in very intense ways. Leuner feels that Guided Affective Imagery should not be used in cases of psychoses, intellectual deficit, organic brain syndrome, severe depressive mood, and in cases of low motivation. However, it can be used in most cases of psychotherapeutic intervention. Leuner has said that using his imagery techniques cuts the time required to accomplish therapeutic goals almost in half. The average treatment course takes from twenty to twenty-five hours. Leuner's technique involves progressive relaxation and imagination training at first. From there he has five standard motifs for the client imagery techniques. He starts with the client in a meadow and allows the client to "travel" within that context and discover what symbols and images emerge. The second motif is that of the brook where one either goes downstream along the brook's course or upstream to its source (representing past and future). The third motif is that of the mountain where, in climbing the mountain, the client is able to discover what it is that stands in her or his way in accomplishing her or his goals. The fourth motif is that of the house which represents the client him or herself. The final motif is standing at the edge of the woods which involves an exploration of the unconscious. These

techniques have been therapeutically successful. The symbols are not always interpreted for the client. It is a matter of symbols being interpreted through the encounter with other symbols. The therapist has to be willing to work symbolically using her or his own imagery abilities. This is true for all therapy done with imagery techniques. The therapist must always be in tune with her or his inner life and be aware of the nature of her or his internal symbol systems.

Ahsen's system of Eidetic Psychotherapy was also a pioneering effort in the imagery field. He uses the concept of the eidetic as a stable, vivid memory representation involving image, feeling, and meaning, as a vehicle into dealing with the client's unconscious conflicts. He works very effectively with psychosomatic illnesses because of the nature of the body component in his understanding of imagery. He feels that psychosomatic problems are often the consequence of an internalized image which reduces psychic conflict that doesn't match reality. In using the stable nature of the eidetic he is able to bring that conflict to the surface, discover the incompatibility with reality, and reform the image. He has had remarkable success which is primarily documented in the Journal of Mental Imagery. His understanding of the image through New Structuralism broadens his work beyond the memory eidetic to be applicable to imagination projection as well. However, Eidetic Psychotherapy, unlike the others explored here, is not narrative. It is geared towards eliciting the eidetic image in almost a repetitive, piecemeal fashion so that the conflict can be overcome.

Eidetic psychotherapy, as well as the other approaches, can be used

in group settings. In being receptive to other people's imaginations, people learn to trust the wisdom of their own. Also, as Ahsen points out, when people participate in another person's imagery, they experience their own catharsis which is of great therapeutic value. It is sometimes safer as a starting place than dealing with their own pain. In group use of imagery technique, the group is presented with an imagery situation and encouraged to experience that within themselves. At the end of that, the members of the group share what elements of their experience they feel comfortable sharing. This is very powerful for group members who are not used to sharing their most private dimensions with even themselves. They learn confidence and gain intimacy skills, as well as gaining the therapeutic value of the imagery therapy itself.

My own approach to imagery therapy is similar to Leuner's in its technique, but not in content. I begin with a progressive relaxation process, adding some deeper relaxation technique, which allows people to move into a slightly altered consciousness. Prior to that, the client and I have worked for several sessions to get a clear picture of the client's history, her or his primary problem areas and conflicts, her or his hopes for the therapy, and primary areas to be explored. After the relaxation, the client is presented with a number of images (such as the meadow, the woods, or, what I have found most helpful with women, a cave, a tunnel, or a river) and asked to choose one to explore. The client is then asked to prepare herself for the exploration by gathering whatever she might need for the journey and asked both if she wishes anyone to accompany her and what role she would like me to play. The

journey is accomplished in a dialogical way, symbols are met and acknowledged but not interpreted at that time. The journey may be extended over several sessions with the client deciding whether he or she wishes to remain in the image or out of it between sessions. That is also an assessment issue for the therapist. These self-exploration techniques are rich in diagnostic and therapeutic value. I have also used them in group settings.

There are many benefits of these therapies. Each therapeutic theory has with it the benefits of its use. Singer lists three important benefits from daydream methods. The first is the opportunity to relive experiences that they have avoided looking at. The second is the important insights gained from looking at the fantasy material and seeing actions that have been guided by the childhood fantasy that is no longer appropriate. And, the third, is that one can use imagery to control and re-direct one's own thoughts and images. Singer also values the fact that imagery seems to bypass the censorship of the self and this leads to fuller disclosure. The methods look at the totality of the experience, not just at symptom relief and this, according to Singer, may be a key to the success of the method.²⁶

Mardi Jon Horowitz says that images can be used in therapy to "yield information, establish empathic understanding, evoke expressions of usually warded-off themes and the means to work through those themes,

²⁶ Jerome I. Singer, The Inner World of Daydreaming (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 12-20.

and to transform moods by modification of attitudes."²⁷ In addition, he feels that the benefit of imagery therapy is that it allows communication of ideas and feelings which are aimed at the modification of maladaptive patterns.

Donald Meichenbaum suggests that imagery benefits clients by conveying to the client a sense of control over her or his imagery and other behaviors and by changing for the client the meaning of her or his maladaptive behavior. He says that, "Prior to (image) therapy, many clients express the feeling that they are 'victims' of the thoughts, images, and feelings they experience. A sense of helplessness with one's internal life is an important component of many presenting problems. Common to each of the imagery-based therapies is the teaching of imagery control."²⁸

James Morrison and Michael Corneta feel that the greatest benefit of mental imagery use in psychotherapy is that it helps an individual to "reconstruct past and present events" in such a way that verbal processes cannot because a person's experience cannot be totally reconstructed through words and it can be through images. They also suggest that imagery can "be a most effective vehicle for inducing change through encoding dynamics, the personal import of images vs. words, bringing out issues difficult to put into words, helping an

²⁷ Horowitz, Image Formation and Psychotherapy, pp. 277-78.

²⁸ Meichenbaum, "Why Does Using Imagery In Psychotherapy Lead to Change?" p. 389.

understanding of the double messages of affect and content, and bringing operational thought into preoperational images."²⁹

All of these qualities are important and could be helpfully elaborated. However, even this brief summary indicates the wide range of benefits that imagery therapy has to offer.

A few words about the relationship between imagery and meditation could be useful here. The common thread that runs through all forms of meditation, which we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, is that they help the meditator to focus. That focus may be on an object, on a word, on the emptiness of the mind, and so on, but the important factor is that meditation screens out the variety of sensory input that is all around us all the time. Consequently, meditation prepares the mind to receive images. Some meditation techniques work to deliberately induce certain kinds of imagery and others seek to empty the mind so that spontaneous imagery can happen. In working with imagery techniques, it is important to help the client be open to receiving images. Relaxation techniques and meditation techniques can be of great benefit in this process.

Finally, it is important to note here, that as women seek new psychological and theological images/ideas/models for themselves, the use of imagery techniques along with forms of meditation and relaxation help women get in touch with new theological and psychological options for themselves in the process of spiritual and psychological growth.

²⁹ Morrison and Corneta, "A Cognitive, Reconstructive Approach," p. 39.

The use of imagery techniques in their integrative capacity provides a method of bringing together tradition and novelty in the context of personal and communal life experience. The image, as we have defined it in this chapter, is set in the internal context of a personal mental model. In other words, all that has gone on before in a person's life is available in some form in the image. As the image dialogues with a new situation, the image is changed as it incorporates the old and the new. As Ahsen says, "In imagery, the picture is no longer a mere copy, but a veritable power, a material process, a meaning, a symbol, a metaphor. The picture has split off from its origin and is making a new association...The copy is asserting itself to become an original."³⁰

What better way to get in touch with new images for God and for self then through imagery techniques which integrate our history with our future?

³⁰ Ahsen, "Image Psychology and the Empirical Method," p. 17.

CHAPTER 5

The Hypothesis, Method, and Process of an Investigation
Into Women's Spiritual and Psychological Growth
Using Group Imagery Techniques

It is important to set this research project in the context of chapters two and three. Theologically, our society as a whole has taken the religious reality which is God and domesticated that into an idol. We, as the religious institution, have gone beyond naming God, to identifying God with one name and one human reality. The religious metaphor of seeing God as being like a father has become the rigid "truth" of "God who is the Father." This putting God into a box has removed God's availability to us in the sense that we then approach God through a very narrow doorway--a doorway many of us don't fit through. This narrow doorway, removed from the experience of the worshipful religious context, and from many people's experiential context, has caused God who is the Father to be irrelevant, in the deepest sense, to almost everyone. Only to those for whom God's fatherhood remains a tensive metaphor, one out of many images through which aspects of God's reality can be glimpsed, is God in the image of Father relevant.

Because of the nature of the idolatry we have chosen to lift up, women are double losers. They lose in the way that everyone does, with the idolatry and irrelevance of a fixed image, but they also lose

because the maleness of the idol reinforces the patriarchy of the culture. And, "when God is male, males are God." (Mary Daly). The idol of God's fatherhood has been used to define women as less than fully human because they are not as much in God's image as are males. We have historically chosen not to recognize, as Gordon Kaufman points out in both God the Problem and The Theological Imagination, that all our concepts of God are imaginative constructions.¹

Women have been denied roles of church leadership especially in our more recent history (post early Church) on the grounds that they are unable to bodily represent God (and Christ) at the altar. They have been denied access to leadership in the synagogue because of characteristics associated with childbearing. As the abstract nature of fatherhood has been elevated, the earthy realities of giving birth have been denigrated.

The consequences to women are many and they are far reaching. They also run very deep in the personal and social psyche. The consequences to theological formulation are also far-reaching. The assumption of God's fatherhood as a single and ultimate model, and its resulting consequences to women and to the society, have limited our questions: questions raised about the divine reality, about the relationships between God and creation, and about the relationships between men and women. Alfred North Whitehead's accurate perception that theological

¹ Gordon Kaufman, God the Problem (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972); The Theological Imagination: Constructing the Concept of God (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981).

debate has really always been around the single question, "Who is God?" does not acknowledge that the debate has looked at less than half of the options: only the male experience has provided the context for the answers to that question.²

In a culture which is now beginning to recognize the oppression of women at all levels, we need to learn new ways of doing theology: theology that begins in the experience of those who have been left out and uses its creative imagination to tap into the questions and the fields of context where the answers may lie. And we have to allow the questions to be just as important, if not more important, than the answers.

The issues in women's psychology are parallel ones. Women's psychology has been formulated out of male experience, by males, with male values and goals. Women's lives have been seriously and negatively affected by that research and formulation. Women have been told that their destiny is linked to their reproductive functions almost exclusively, and then told that the roles around that biological function weren't worth very much to the culture. Self-esteem and identity for women were secondary to those of men and often women experienced both their worth and their identity through the men with whom they were associated.

As was discussed in Chapter three, women's experience needs to be

² Norman Pittinger, "Picturing God," Religion in Life, 49, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 170.

taken seriously both in terms of personal development and in terms of theory building. At both the personal and communal levels, women need to gain confidence that their experience does define their reality. Their growth may then occur in that context.

Out of these foundational assumptions, I developed a method using imagery techniques that would affect both women's spiritual and personal growth. My assumption is that with the enhancement of spiritual growth, women's psychological lives are also enhanced. Consequently, I developed a twelve-hour program, focussing on meditation and imagery techniques, where women would engage in private and shared imagery experiences towards connecting with new options for God imagery. As I have discussed above, in moving away from an idolatry of God who is the father, women benefit in both increasing relevance for their spiritual lives and in connecting with images of the divine which empower them in new ways. This is particularly true if their new images contain elements of their own experience. As we seem to have a need to make God imagery personal, this might include images of God as mother, God as friend, and God as guide as well as others.

Using an instrument, which will be discussed in detail later in the chapter, which measures the element of quest, or willingness to search, in a person's religious life, I developed the following hypothesis. A group experience using a particular set of progressive imagery techniques to connect with personal identity images and images of God will result in a higher level of a quest orientation in an individual's approach to religion. Again, the base assumption is that the quest orientation reflects a willingness to live without a single fixed image

for God, to be willing to experience the questions of faith without forcing secure answers, and to allow faith to be relevant through a dialogue between life and belief. These characteristics are measured through the instrument used in the study and are approaches necessary to women in this time of transition.

The second hypothesis was that during this study, which used psycho-imagination techniques in enhancing spirituality, women would develop new images for God, and the capacity to create ongoing God images as needed. The ongoing image-making would help keep women's spirituality fresh, dynamic, and relevant, and would help avoid the idolatry pitfalls of holding a single God image. The measurement for this hypothesis was quite subjective. An intensive interview before the group assessed the pre-group understanding of, and relationship to, God. The comments during the group process indicated the way images were being generated and changing. And, the final evaluation repeated some of the interview questions to monitor the changes in images and understanding of God.

There were several side issues which I hoped to explore through this study. One was the question of what helped people to form their God images in the first place given the limited options provided by institutional religion. A second was how they saw the relationship between faith and religion in their own lives. A third was how they had attempted to keep their faith relevant to their lives or, if they had abandoned all attempts to do that, how they approached religion in any form in their lives. And, fourth, using the Meyers-Briggs Types Inventory, if different personality types approached religion in ways

particular to their type and if different personality types responded to meditation and imagery techniques differently.

There was also an assumption that women who are in acknowledged life transitions are more likely to be willing to engage in a process that might help them make their spirituality more relevant to them.

Within the twelve hour process itself, I experimented with several variables. One was the format of the twelve hours. In the three groups that were offered, one was offered in the form of a weekend retreat, one was offered in the form of two Sunday experiences, and the third was offered as an evening gathering once a week for six weeks. The participants selected the format of their choice.

I also experimented with types of imagery techniques. These will be explored in more detail later, but they ranged from art therapy, to directed imagery, to less-directed imagery, to object-focussed meditation, to process journal imagery. These different types were developed for two reasons. One is that they were offered in a "progressive" fashion so that they became more intense and required a higher level of motivation and trust over time. The second is the belief that different techniques will work for different people and, in this way, there would be more opportunities for each woman to have a meaningful experience.

The measurement instruments were given at least one week prior to the beginning of the twelve hour experience and the intensive interview was done at that time as well. The orientation to religion instrument was re-administered at the end of the twelve hours in order to measure change in the quest orientation. Some of the key interview questions

were repeated in the form of an evaluation at the end of the experience.

The changes in both spiritual orientation (as measured by the religious orientation instrument) and in self perception (through the evaluation) were noted and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the group process. These results will be reported in chapter six. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to detailing the process of the group and an analysis of the instruments and techniques used.

The initial choices about this process had to do with group formation and description. I decided to form the group through self-selection, feeling that women who chose to engage in a group described as focussing on faith development would be more likely to be people in transition. Consequently, I placed a press release describing the group, its formats, and its leadership, in local newspapers. I also notified the local churches and posted notices within the counseling center where I am employed. Women who called out of interest in the group were told that it was a spiritual growth group which would be experimenting with meditation and imagery techniques and that, because there were new methods being tried, there would be some pre- and post-group testing. Women were also told that they had to be able to commit themselves to the entire twelve hour experience as well as the two hours required for the pre-group interview and testing. I had made the decision to limit the group size to six women in each format in order to give appropriate attention to each group member in a limited amount of time. There were twenty responses to the advertisements with fifteen women committing to and engaging in the full process.

The numbers were kept small because of the determination that this

investigation would be a pilot investigation with a variety of variables. This is an initial exploration to determine future methods for ongoing study.

The experience began, for these women, with an intensive interview. The questions involved general life experiences as well as specifically religious experiences. Life history was gathered as were sketches of parents and siblings as a way to explore the impact of history on God image formation. Part of the group process would focus on getting in touch with pre-operational memories, which would be stored in imagery, and early God representations from that age. Consequently, history was necessary as background information. The questions (see appendix) also explored certain theological beliefs and their attitude towards religion, the church, spirituality, and God. The answers to these questions as they relate to the group process results will be shared in chapter six.

After the interview, each group member was asked to fill out three instruments. The first is the religious-orientation inventory developed by C. Daniel Batson.³

This scale is based in the scale developed by Gordon Allport who investigated the differences in the way people viewed and experienced their religious lives. Allport distinguished between two types of religious orientations. The first was the person for whom religion was

3 C. Daniel Batson and W. Larry Ventis, The Religious Experience: A Social-Psychological Perspective (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 185.

intrinsic. He equated this with the mature personality who had an interest in ideas and values beyond immediate personal needs, had the ability to objectify his or her needs, being able to see him or herself from other people's point of view, and had a unifying philosophy of life. This person would have a mature religion which for Allport was characterized as engaging in complex, critical reflection on religious issues. For Allport, the other orientation was in people for whom religion satisfied extrinsic needs. He characterized this approach as immature religion. Eventually, Allport dropped the mature/immature distinctions and focussed on intrinsic and extrinsic labels. He simplified and narrowed his definitions so that eventually they became that the extrinsically motivated person uses his or her religion while the intrinsically motivated person lives it. Allport developed measurement scales to use in determining whether people were intrinsically or extrinsically motivated.⁴

Batson felt that Allport's distinctions were helpful. However, he felt that an important orientation had been ignored. He perceived that the intrinsic scale measured beliefs that have been internalized and are lived by and the extrinsic scale measured the importance of more external benefits of religion, but there was no measure of the dimension of religion which searches through questioning and through relating personal issues to the development of faith. Based on this perception, he developed a scale which he titled the quest orientation. This

4 Ibid., pp. 142-44.

perspective has to do with being able to view religion from a variety of perspectives and find meaning in that process.

There has been much debate about Batson's quest orientation. Ralph Hood and Ronald Morris have been critical of the quest dimension for several reasons. First of all, they feel that Batson is attempting to show that the quest dimension is superior to the intrinsic dimension. They have said that Batson's assumption is that religion is healthy if one is struggling as opposed to "resting secure in their faith."⁵ Others have criticized the concept of quest on these grounds as well. Michael Donahue criticizes Batson saying that the quest orientation is more a measure of agnosticism than a way of being religious.⁶ John Finney and H. Newton Malony also feel that Batson puts a value on the questing approach to religion which negates the fundamentalist orientation.⁷

Batson, in a response to Hood and Morris, says that their critique of "quest is best" has to do with their need to think in black and white terms. He says, "It is not our goal, nor has it ever been our goal, to

5 Ralph W. Hood, Jr. and Ronald J. Morris, "Conceptualization of Quest: A Critical Rejoinder To Batson," Review of Religious Research 26, no. 4 (June, 1985): 392.

6 Michael J. Donahue, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religiousness: Review and Meta-analysis," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 48, no.2 (February, 1985): 412.

7 John R. Finney and H. Newton Maloney, Jr., "Means, End, and Quest: A Research Note," Review of Religious Research 26, no. 4 (June, 1985): 410.

prove that quest is best. Our goal is to understand the psychological and social correlates--positive and negative--of each dimension of religious orientation."⁸

There has also been considerable debate about whether Batson's orientations are typologies or dimensions. Finney and Malony feel that the three orientations are typologies and therefore, one is mutually exclusive of another. By implication, Hood and Morris also feel that way. Batson responds that the three dimensions are not typologies but they are "independent, continuous variables."⁹

Batson and Ventis make a good case with documented statistics demonstrating that the three orientations statistically load separately and measure different factors. All three factors are independent of each other so that each person has an extrinsic orientation, an intrinsic orientation, and a quest orientation. It is the degree to which each of those qualities is present that makes up a person's general approach to religion.

Hood and Morris, finally, critique Batson saying that he mixes up the categories of process and content and in certain ways values process over content. Batson replies that process and content are inseparable and that content reveals process and vice versa. I believe that this

⁸ C. Daniel Batson, "Misconception of Quest: A Reply to Hood and Morris," Review of Religious Research 26, no.4 (June, 1985): 402.

⁹ Ibid., p. 398.

difference reveals a philosophical difference between the two experimenters but not an experimental difference.

I feel that Batson defends his position well and accurately. The data from my study indicates that changes in the three orientations do not parallel each other in individual persons, implying that they do measure different qualities. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.

All of those people who critique the specifics of Batson's quest dimension, also feel that he has isolated an important aspect of religious orientation. Donahue concludes his critique with the statement, "Batson has, in fact, made an important contribution to the psychology of religion through his quest concept. The necessity for spiritual questing and growth is central to what is best in all religious traditions."¹⁰

It appears, then, that the instrument which Batson has developed does measure the quest dimension of religious orientation and this is the dimension in women that I wish to measure in my study. Therefore, it seems that the Religious Inventory developed by Batson is an appropriate measurement instrument.

The second instrument used in the pre-test process was the Meyers-Briggs Types Inventory. This instrument measures personality factors based on Jung's historic personality types. Jung felt that

10 Donahue, "Intrinsic And Extrinsic Religiousness....," p. 414.

within each person there were differences in the way they perceived and made judgments about the world. Each of those differences were part of a spectrum of possibilities within each individual's personality. Isabel Briggs Myers along with her mother, developed scales through which to assess those spectrums. There are four dimensions that are measured on these scales. As a general statement of the theory behind this test, Briggs Myers states,

These basic differences (in mental functioning) concern the way people prefer to use their minds, specifically the way they perceive and the way they make judgments. Perceiving is here understood to include the process of becoming aware of things, people, occurrences and ideas. Judging includes the process of coming to conclusions about what has been perceived. Together, perception and judgment which make up a large portion of people's total mental activity and govern much of their outer behavior, because perception--by definition--determines what people see in a situation and their judgment determines what they decide to do about it.¹¹

The judging/perceiving choice has to do with a person's preference for either exploration or making decisions. Judging types prefer to decide things about life whereas the perceptive types prefer ongoing experience. Both elements exist in each person. One important context of the perceiving function has to do with whether a person is an introvert or an extrovert. In the popular understanding, one could say that an extrovert gathers her or his energy from the outside world while the introvert primarily gains energy from his or her inside world. Myers says that the conduct of extraverts is based on the outside

¹¹ Isabel Briggs Myers with Peter B. Myers, Gifts Differing (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1980), p. 1.

situation and the introvert bases her or his conduct on inner perceptions and concepts. No one is either a pure extravert or introvert but has a preference for one way of being over the other. Another aspect of the personality is whether a person perceives primarily through data collected via the five senses or primarily through the process of intuition, a more indirect process by way of the unconscious. Again, both processes are used in each person, but everyone prefers one or the other. Finally, the differences in making judgments comes primarily through the choice of using either thinking or feeling as a preferred way of coming to conclusions. Thinking is the more logical process and feeling works through assigning subjective value to things. In summary, then, there are the four poles: (1) introvert-extravert, (2) intuition/sensing, (3) feeling/thinking, and (4) judging/perceiving. Every one prefers one side of each pole and that impacts the way they approach life.

There have been a few studies done looking at the relationship between introversion/extraversion but no clear relationships have been established. There have been some studies that link introversion to more vivid imagery and other studies linking introversion with uncontrolled imagery. There seem to be some indications that imagery ability and motivation are related to the personality traits of introversion and extraversion. My clinical experience has indicated that extraverts are better able to profit from imagery therapy. However, Moira Galton, Yvonne Hayes, and John Richardson conducted a study in introversion, extraversion, and mental imagery and concluded that, "introversion-extraversion appears to be an effective means of

discriminating between subjects in terms of their experienced mental imagery. Introverts report more mental imagery and produce superior performance in verbal learning tasks than extraverts."¹²

Since the literature is not clear about the links between intraversion-extraversion and mental imagery, I felt that it might be helpful to administer the MBTI to explore any possible relationships.

In terms of the rationale behind the group process, I arranged the progression of imagery and the content foci after the model that Batson and Ventis present regarding the process of creative spiritual experience.¹³

Batson and Ventis suggest that the process of spiritual experience parallels the creative process. Both are reality transforming experiences. They indicate that the literature supports the creative process as one that follows a four-step movement. Those four steps are: (1) preparation, (2) incubation, (3) illumination, and (4) verification. In the preparation stage one encounters a problem that cannot be solved in one's normal manner. In the second stage, a person stops working on the frustrating problem because they do not have available options for the solution. In the third stage, a solution occurs to the person spontaneously, seeming to emerge out of nothing. Finally, in fourth

¹² Moira A. Gralton, Yvonne A. Hayes, and John T.E. Richardson, "Introversion-Extraversion and Mental Imagery," Journal of Mental Imagery, 3, no.1: (Fall 1979): 9.

¹³ Batson and Ventis, Religious Experience, p. 215.

stage, the solution is tested out to see if it works. Batson and Ventis suggest that the spiritual growth experience works in somewhat the same way. They say that in the first stage, existential crisis, an individual finds that their faith isn't working for them in facing a current life crisis. In frustration, the person gives up trying to understand the problem with the current faith perspective. This stage is called self-surrender. With the abandonment of trying to solve the crisis within the current faith understanding, comes stage three which is illumination, the ah-ha experience. And, the results of that vision engender the fourth stage of new life. Batson and Ventis discuss in some detail those things which facilitate movement into certain stages. They talk about psychedelic drug use, religious language, and meditation as potential enhancers of religious experience. Psychedellic drug use can facilitate both the incubation stage and the illumination stage, according to research, but cannot really address the other two stages. In the incubation stage, psychedelic drugs appear to loosen the person's grip on reality. The drugs also seem to enhance image formation towards new possibilities thereby playing a role in the illumination stage. Meditation/imagery focus also seem to facilitate religious experience, according to Batson and Ventis. They suggest that meditation, in its attempt to focus the mind on one-pointedness, helps a person let go of solutions which do not work. Consequently, meditation seems to affect the incubation stage of spiritual experience but not the other three. Batson and Ventis also propose, based on speculation rather than on the empirical evidence they had for the other two facilitators, that religious language is tied to the process of "religious re-creation"

through its figurative, metaphorical nature which is inherent to true religious language. The more symbolic the language is, the more facilitative it seems to be to religious experience. As Batson and Ventis point out,

Building upon these clues, we can speculate about how religious language might facilitate creative religious experience. If synthetic religious symbols contain in kernel form the existential questions and ways of seeing them anew, then the symbol contains the elements necessary to address these questions in a listener and to suggest a new way of looking at them...if synthetic religious symbols contain these elements, then religious language would seem to be capable of facilitating three stages of creative religious experience. They could heighten existential crisis (preparation), suggest a new vision (illumination), and, embedded within a larger interpretive language system such as a theology, provide guidance in how this vision is to be put into practice in a new life (verification). The only stage of the re-creative process that religious language would not facilitate would be self-surrender (incubation); it would not, because the active information-processing necessary to understand language is incompatible with the letting go of the self-surrender stage.¹⁴

Batson and Ventis go on to say that one of the limits of this understanding of religious language and its facilitative ability in creative religious experience is that the language must be recognized as symbolic language and not literal language. As we have noted in the discussion of theological problems, much of the current religious language is taken literally. If the symbols are seen literally, then logical solutions follow rather than creative possibilities. When this happens, they say, the questions are then trivialized and,

14 Batson and Ventis, Religious Experience, p. 130.

transformation becomes impossible.¹⁵

Batson and Ventis conclude by suggesting that it may be possible to put together various combinations of these facilitators in order to enable religious transformative experiences.

Based on this discussion, I arranged both the content and the process of the study group to include: (1) metaphorical/symbolic language in the imagery experiences, (2) meditation techniques, and (3) a progression in the content of the imagery exercises to facilitate the stages of the creative process.

It will be helpful at this stage to look at the details of the "curriculum" for the group and to see how Batson and Ventis's idea on the transformative religious experience was carried out. I will provide the plan for each session along with the rationale for why the particular content and process were chosen for that session.

We began the group process with group building. Introductions were exchanged and each group member shared why she was interested in being in the group. I talked about the overall plan for the twelve hour process as being one of getting to know ourselves and the way we experience God more intimately. I also explained the progression through the different forms of meditation and imagery that we would be experiencing and answered any questions that the women had. I encouraged the group members to use this group as a chance to experiment with new ideas and new experiences. I explained that one can use mental

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

imagery to experiment in ways that do not involve the kinds of consequences that experimenting in the "real world" might. This would give them a great deal of freedom to try new things. In each format, most of the group members were motivated to try these new experiences.

We began at a rational level. In order to lay some of the assumptions on the table, I asked each group member to make a list of the roles they play in their lives. I asked them to capture each role in a label such as "friend", "mother," "daughter," etc. I then asked them to exchange lists with someone they didn't know very well and that person was to circle one of those roles. The lists were then returned and each person was asked to report how well the single role described her as an entire person. The rationale in this was to demonstrate at a symbolic level how we are very complex beings who cannot be described in single models but need multiple models to even begin to convey our complexity. Interestingly, each woman was able to come up with one or two primary models that described her more fully than did any one of the other labels. The parallel was then drawn at this conceptual level with the difficulty of thinking of God in God's complexity with only one model. We, as a group, generated a list on newsprint of the possible roles/labels/metaphors for God. We again drew the parallel that just as no one of our models describes us fully nor even is completely accurate, no one of God's metaphors can fully represent who God is. We were able to see that the difficulty we have in describing ourselves (and we at some level are knowable) is magnified when trying to find models for God, who is, by definition, always beyond our understanding.

The rest of the group experience, over the following eleven hours,

would involve the process of moving this conceptual agreement into internal experience and in helping the metaphors for God that would be generated at the experiential level be relevant to the rapidly changing lives of these women.

In order to shift from this almost entirely conceptual process to a more experiential process, I provided crayons, markers, and paper and asked group members to represent an image of themselves in relationship with God on paper. There was much uncertainty about this process but the group members did follow through with it. They then shared the meaning behind these images on paper. The images were able to convey much more meaning than the words alone had.

Following this exercise, I explained the process of relaxation and guided meditation and answered questions. I then led the group in a progressive relaxation process concluding with a guided meditation which allowed them to let go of any concerns they had that might be getting in the way of the process. Almost all of the group members were able to carry out this process quite well. The two people (out of the total fifteen) that weren't able to relax were able to talk about their fear of letting go of control and to get group support for that. Only one of the fifteen women had previously experienced any form of relaxation exercises or guided meditation.

This exercise and discussion concluded the first two hour session. In the other two formats we continued, after a break, with a second guided meditation. The weekly group began the next session with each member sharing briefly about her week's experiences and then being led through another progressive relaxation exercise before participating in

the following guided imagery. In this meditation the group members were led into a crisis situation that they were witnessing. The meditation took them into a hospital room where they saw a person in a bed and a family member of that sick person in the room. They were to stand in the doorway of the hospital room and observe the situation. At some point in the meditation they were to recognize that the person in the bed had died and the family member was distressed. They were then to become aware of God's presence and they were told that they should also become aware of the nature of God's activity. They were then free to become involved in the scene. After a suitable length of time in the imagery, they were brought back to the present and helped to process their experiences. Many had felt helpless. Many had felt that God was unable to help the person's grief. Many could not connect with God's presence. After considerable discussion I asked them to go back into that imagery with my guidance and with the instruction that they attempt to experience God in some new way that was different from the previous experience and from their normal way. We went through the same process. When debriefing the experience some of the women were not able to change their image. Those that were able to change the image discovered that the whole scene progressed differently and they tended to have partnership images with God. In other words, the woman and God would work together to bring comfort, to facilitate the newly dead person's union with God, to advise, etc. The content of the process was different for each person, but the process of partnership was quite common. The rationale of using the crisis experience is related to the first stage of Batson and Ventis' creative spiritual growth process.

The crisis in the image may help a person to connect with the part of themselves which struggles to understand their own crises in relationship to their beliefs about God. This may facilitate movement into a preparation stage. According to Batson and Ventis the use of symbolic religious language (images of God's presence in a crisis situation) is a facilitator of this creative spiritual experience.

We shifted at this point to a different approach. The intensity of this kind of imagery is very tiring and there is a risk that the group member will begin to rely on rational cognition rather than the imagination of the semi-altered state of consciousness. Once one begins to "perform," then the integrative power of the image is lost. Without losing the relaxation that we had achieved, I passed out a number of objects that could remind them of aspects of God. These included a framed photograph of a crucifixion sculpture, a postcard with a mother holding a bear and her baby with the caption, "I am with you always," a wrought iron cross with chalice and plate attached, a plaque with a psalm on it, a copy of a prayer, and so on. I asked people to hold each item for as long as they wanted and to get in touch with whatever image of God it elicited. They were instructed to, in a meditative way, experience that image and what it might mean to them. When all members had done that, we processed the exercise and shared the images that we had experienced. The rationale for the sharing is threefold. On the one hand, women have not been encouraged to share their experiences as meaningful. In sharing their stories women are hearing themselves in each other and they gain confidence to continue believing in their own experience. Second, as Richard R. Niebuhr says, "Sensible, organizing

images born in shared experiences are the means of telling of a feeling of spiritual insight."¹⁶

In order to become clear about the beginnings of creative spiritual growth, the language of shared imagery helps to articulate that experience. The third rationale is that by hearing one another's new god images and the meaning attached to them, each woman vicariously experiences the other's meaning. This facilitates the spiritual experience of all.

After this we moved into a second guided imagery exercise, again with a critical focus. However, the content was more in the hands of the group member. The stage was set with the woman being asked to find a comfortable, safe place in her image and find herself with a friend who had a serious problem and who wanted her help. She was asked to image this situation and the presence of God in it. She was then left to complete the imagery by herself. At the end of the exercise, I asked the women to share their experiences, the image(s) of God they had, and the feelings about the experience. The women had a greater variety of images than before, and again, they had participatory images whereas in the very first imagery they'd had less dynamic and less involved imagery of God's presence. The women, on the whole, felt positive about these experiences.

The rationale behind this second crisis imagery was that they would

¹⁶ Richard R. Neibuhr, "The Tragic Play of Symbols," Harvard Theological Review, 75, no.1 (1982): 28.

use their own experience, and consequently make the image more real and relevant, with the content left open. This did prove to be the case.

I then asked the women to draw or to convey on paper in some way, the imagery they had experienced in the last guided meditation. In sharing these pictures, the women were better able to convey the totality of their imagery than they could in words.

This ended the second session of the weekly group. The other groups took an extended break at this point and then regathered. With the regathering of all three groups (with the weekly group first being asked to share any experiences in the preceding week which would be important to getting back into the group experience) all were led in progressive relaxation and a guided meditation to help them let go of tension and any issues that were blocking their presence to the group process. By this time, even the women who'd had difficulty letting go enough to image, were enjoying these relaxation imagery trips and reported being able to use them on their own away from the group.

After that experience, group members were given the instructions that in the guided imagery they would be experiencing they would be taken to a comfortable meadow where they would feel completely relaxed. In this setting they would experience God through a variety of images. I would be supplying the images and they would have about a minute to spend with each of the symbols. I then led the members to the mental meadow where they were confronted with the following list of God images, about one per minute:

1. Whatever spontaneous first image occurred to them.
2. A young male person with kindly features.

3. A motherly looking female with a warm, caring expression and extended arms.
4. A cloud-like experience of warmth and light.
5. A late middle-aged male figure.
6. A sisterly image of a person around your own age who is friendly and attentive.
7. A butterfly which lands near you with beautifully colored wings.
8. A grandfatherly type figure.
9. A sunrise of particular beauty.

At the end of the exercise, we processed the experience. Of the fifteen women, 12 were more emotionally moved and involved by the feminine imagery of the mother and the sister figures than by any other. Of those twelve, eleven had never had a feminine God image in their previous experience. Even the most sceptical member, who was in the weekly group, felt drawn to the sister image of God in a way that helped her to experience the reality of God. The women were very positive about this more directive experience. The rationale of the exercise was to provide options and coaching for these women who had little experience in generating images for God out of their own experience. There was a sense that it might facilitate an illuminative experience for some of them, which it did.

The women were then asked to return in their imagery to the meadow and to imagine God's presence in the form of the feeling which I would introduce to them. Again, they would have about a minute with each feeling expression. The feelings which were suggested were: joy, anger, compassion, laughter, pain, tolerance, tears/sadness, pride, and

love. This imagery experience was more difficult for the women. Some of the feelings as God images were unavailable to them. For example, none of the women could picture God as anger. Some of the women did not participate in the imagery (which was always given as an option). Those that were able to follow through with this exercise, found that the emotions which are more traditionally associated with God in our culture, love, compassion, and joy, were the easiest to experience. Several of the women were challenged by this exercise to broaden their images of God to include some of the less familiar feelings such as pain, sadness, and pride. The rationale with this exercise was again to provide options and, this time, in the mode of action instead of substance. Many of the feminist theologians suggest that in order for us to avoid literalizing God imagery, we need to see God as a verb. This was an experience in the energy of God rather than in the form. With both of these last two exercises, I used my own internal religious imagery life to provide guidance. In imagery technique, whether in psychotherapy or spiritual growth, the therapist/guide has to be willing to be in touch with her own internal processes and to use these without imposing them. It is sometimes difficult to know where to draw the line between use and imposition in a directed imagery experience such as these were.

A few of the group members had some difficulty getting into the imagery that was completely internal. Therefore, I decided to try a meditation form that had an external focus. This external focus can help ground people who need a more concrete beginning for their imagery process. With this in mind, the group was then taught a meditation

technique that was developed by Avery Brooke as a way of getting in touch with the reality of God.¹⁷

The rationale behind using this technique, for me, was to let the group get in touch with their spiritual reality after having learned new imagery techniques and the process of developing new imagery for God. Brooke's technique involves a four step process. Each step requires five minutes. An external or internal object is used as the focus for the meditation and the focus allows images of or from God to enter one's awareness. Brooke indicates that, at least at first, the simpler the meditation object can be, the better because it is the reality beyond the focus object which is of importance. The group members are each given a focus object. In this case I used a plant leaf for each member. The first five minutes, after the relaxation process, are used to ask the question of "What have we here." This is an observation stage where the meditator looks at the focus object and notices its characteristics and its details. This has little to do with imagination at this point. In the second five minutes, as directed by the guide, the meditator asks the question of "What might this mean?" At this time, the person must listen to her or his imagination for the answers to that question. The answers emerge usually in some form out of the observations made in the previous stage. The third five minutes is spent in listening for the answer to the question, "What is God saying

¹⁷ Avery Brooke, How To Meditate Without Leaving the World (New York: Seabury, 1979).

to me?" The meditator is urged to listen to spontaneous guidance about the questions which have been raised thus far. The fear is always that the meditator will not be able to distinguish between her or his own imagination and the voice of God. Brooke says not to worry about this, that staying open to hearing God's voice is the critical element. The final five minutes is spent in deciding on a "token", or a small behavioral commitment, which will help make the answers or insights concrete and available to the meditator. The token should be related in some way to the insight.

An illustration of how this works might be helpful. One of the women in the group, in looking at her leaf, noticed several things. She noted the complexity of the veins, she noted the differences in color tones, and she noted the autonomy of this leaf even though it was cut off from the tree. In the second five minutes while questioning what these observations might mean, she became caught by the fact of the leaf's autonomy. It reminded her of her worries about her elderly mother who seemed to be at an age where she should enter a nursing home. This woman had been in conflict about this with her mother. The mother felt competent to stay at home but the daughter was worried about her since her home was in a distant state. She began to feel that the meditation was urging her to re-connect her mother with herself by moving her into a nursing home here in this area which is what she had felt for a long time. However, when she moved into the third step of asking what God was trying to say, she began to experience a strong sense that the leaf, which had fallen off the tree and still maintained its autonomy, would soon die. She also realized that this was the

natural way of the world and it had followed its appropriate course. In reattaching the leaf to the tree it would still die and at the same time it would lose its natural autonomy. She felt this was applicable to her mother who felt that it was important for her own self worth to maintain her life as she saw fit despite the risks of old age. It was the daughter's anticipatory grief which had been guiding her. The answer she felt she had received from God was that she needed to focus on her own letting go because her mother was appropriately moving through the aging process in her own way. In the fourth step, this woman decided to call her mother and discuss the issue again with this new insight allowing her to acknowledge her mother's right to be her own person. Incidentally, in this case, the woman experienced a new image of God throughout the meditation which was a motherly image of God. I feel that this image which was very appropriate to the issue, helped guide her through the meditation.

The women found this process to be very helpful. Those women, for whom the more abstract meditations were difficult, found this technique to be more amenable to their preferred ways of processing information. There were several women in the group who tended to think very concretely and the external focus, which grounded them, helped them get in touch with new imagery. The differences between people in their imagery abilities and preferred ways of information processing was one of the reasons I attempted to use a variety of imagery techniques. In a group, one can't assess for the group as one would for an individual for the most appropriate imagery approach.

The end of this exercise marked the end of the third weekly session

and the end of the first day of the other two formats. When we regathered for the next session, all three groups had to re-connect with each other through sharing experiences from the time apart and sharing insights that had occurred to them related to the first six hours of the group.

The second half of the twelve hour process began with a relaxation exercise and a guided imagery to help make the participants fully present to the group experience. In a sense the previous six hour experience had been a unit in and of itself. It had attempted to facilitate all four steps of the creative spiritual experience process, concluding with the token of the last meditation which was a symbol of the "new life" step. With this last six hours, we started back at the beginning in a very real way. We began with working on early childhood memories and the stored energy and images that were captured in pre-verbal form. We began using some of the imagery exercises developed by Akhter Ahsen in his "Eidetic Parents Test."¹⁸

The test was developed in order to facilitate the emergence of eidetic imagery around significant early experiences and feelings with regard to the parents. Ahsen feels that much neurotic adult behavior comes from a "stuck" and usually inaccurate image from childhood and that if one can get clear about the reality of the image, one can be freed from the problems of the false one. My rationale was first, to

¹⁸ Akhter Ahsen, The Eidetic Parents Test and Analysis (New York: Brandon House, 1972), pp. 52ff.

help these women tap into these early childhood memories stored in image form in order to help them make sense of their current behavior. As Nelle Morton states,

When an image remains an unconscious part of a person's self, the innerness of the self is denied. Since images may set styles of life long before persons reach the age of conceptualization, we may expect many adults to be controlled by images that formed in their psyche when they were children.¹⁹

The second reason for this approach was that the early formation of God imagery may very well be pre-conceptual as well. Ana-Maria Rizutto suggests that well-before any formal introduction into the life of the church/synagogue occurs, the child has a clear image of God which has been derived, at least in part, through associations with the parents.²⁰ It is, therefore, important to elicit imagery which may contain early God images as well as self and parent images, in this kind of process. If the women tried to work to form new God imagery without being aware of childhood motivation to maintain a fixed God image, then the new God images would be discordant and short-term. The ongoing process of developing relevant, flexible god-imagery would not be able to resist the unconscious motivation to retain the early image.

We used the first six items of Ahsen's Eidetic Parents Test which

19 Morton, The Journey Is Home, p. 33.

20 Ana-Maria Rizzuto, The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 8.

are:

1. To picture the house where you lived your childhood (or if you moved a lot, the house where you identify your childhood). Locate your parents in the house. Where are they in the home and what do you see them doing? Are there memories connected with this picture?

2. Set aside the picture of the house and just see your parents standing directly in front of you. Who is on the right and who is on the left? Can their positions be switched? Try to switch them. Now switch them back. Do you experience any difficulty?

3. Are the parents united as a couple or are they separate? Describe the character of the space that each one occupies in terms of warmth, brightness, size, and so on.

4. Are your parents active or passive as they stand in front of you? Which of the two seems more active or aggressive to you? How is the other parent in comparison?

5. Now set aside this image and see your parents running in open countryside. Are they both running? Who is running faster?

6. Why are your parents running? Is there a purpose? Observe the style of their running.²¹

After the first three items we stopped and processed the experience thus far. We then did the second set but adapted the last one to include, first the image of the child of the parents (the imager's

21 Ahsen, Eidetics Parents Test, pp. 52-62.

self-image as a child). We then included the image of God. Questions were then asked about how the child was welcomed or ignored by the parents and how God's presence impacted the experience. These imagery contexts aroused a number of intense memories for the participants. It also helped many women to see their childhood relationship with their parents in a clearer light. This in turn shed light on current experience of parents and of self. This is one of the few imagery exercises where anger was readily available to the group members and they shared significant stories about their early histories. In sharing the stories, several women seemed to experience some relief. One of the women got in touch with material that was very painful to her and she went on to seek some therapy in relation to those memories.

The next exercise was designed to also work with childhood memories but of a slightly later age. We embarked on a guided imagery into the school age years. During this exercise, the participants were asked to return to the home of their childhood and wander through it until it became familiar. After this they were to find the room where there was the most conflict in the home and to place themselves in the scene, either as an observer or as a participant. They were then asked to bring God's presence into that setting and see what difference it made. Most of the women chose to bring a God image of protector and nurturer into the scene, most often a male image, who would keep the child isolated from the problem. The women reported that this was a god image that had existed for them at this age. They were able to see how that had become, for many of them, their ongoing god image even when it didn't fit their current needs. One woman talked about the way she

dealt with God was to re-image this protector when she was in trouble and to "put God away" again when everything was going well. This rather limited approach to God was seen to have roots in early childhood when the women felt less in control of their lives and their environment. They also became aware that it might not enable them to feel as strong as adults as they might like. Many women felt that this was an image they wanted available to them, but not as a primary or single image.

This completed the fourth session of the weekly group. They regathered with the reconnecting process we had used in previous weeks: sharing life experiences and participating in relaxation exercises. The retreat groups also took a break and regathered. We then moved into an exercise that would address memories of adolescence. After moving into a relaxed state, I asked the group members to do some imagistic free associating around the following contexts:

1. Home room in high school;
2. The high school principle;
3. Your best friend;
4. The cafeteria at school;
5. A school dance;
6. Homework;
7. After school time;
8. Parents during high school;
9. Activities;
10. Graduation.

I then asked them to find their most powerful memory of this time and to focus on it, exploring the feelings and meanings of it. I then asked

them to see if there was a sense of closure to that memory. We processed the experience as a group. Most people found that this time in their lives was pleasant and that the memories, for the most part, had closure.

We then discussed the fact that adolescence was probably a time of questioning for them about all aspects of life, including their faith lives. They agreed that this was so. I had them try to remember the questions that had been important to them at that time in their lives. Following that, I asked each person to make a list of the questions that they had about life now. In a relaxed state, I asked them to let their minds wander through their recent histories and into the present and future and to record any questions, ranging from very specific to very general and abstract, that occurred to them. This was difficult to begin for most of the women as they felt that they should have answers by this time in life rather than questions. However, once they got started, they were able to generate many questions. When they were done, those who wanted to, exchanged lists with the other women and thereby expanded the possible questions of life. Examples of these questions included, "Why do I keep getting involved with losers?", "What does God want for my life?" and "Why is there suffering in the world?"

I then asked the women to participate in another guided meditation which involved them going to a comfortable, safe place where they could be relaxed, inviting God's presence there, and asking God the question which was most important to them. We used Brooke's method of meditation, spending five minutes with observing the question itself in its relationship to the person's life; five minutes with what the

meaning was behind that particular question being raised, and five minutes with what God has to say in response to that question. They were then to develop a token that would help them make sense out of the answers they had received and which would help them to continue to raise life questions.

The women, without exception, found this exercise of listing their questions, exchanging them with other women, and then meditating on them, to be very helpful. We emphasized the fact that both questions and answers change in response to changing life situations and that the answer one experiences today may not fit with the next day's context.

This ended the fourth session of the weekly group. They requested that we have a four hour session for the next week which would conclude the twelve hours because, after understanding the next set of exercises, felt that it would be too choppy if it were broken into two sessions. We made that adaptation to the format. The other groups took an extended break at this point in preparation for the final exercise which would take close to three hours.

As we regathered and reconnected, I passed out notebooks to be used for personal journals. The final imagery exercise was based on Ira Progoff's intensive process journal meditation with some adaptations to make it suitable to our particular group.

Progoff's method is based on the principle that our faith lives intertwine with other dimensions of our lives over our history. His journal method is designed to help us recall life memories that have to do with significant personal and spiritual moments. In the journal, specific techniques are used to take us deeper into memory than we

ordinarily go. Progoff says that, in this, we "re-enter the continuity of our whole spiritual history as we have personally experienced it, and by means of our methodology we add to it one further and deeper experience at a time."²²

That methodology involves a meditative state, allowing imagery to enter the consciousness under the guidance of given categories. These categories progressively tap into the meditator's spiritual journey and their hopes for its future. The writing takes place in, what Progoff calls the "twilight state." This means that a person moves into a relaxed state of mind and then ponders a certain question or category that the guide has given. When the person is ready, then he or she begins to write down feelings and insights regarding that category. One stays in this relaxed, meditative state even while writing so that the material is derived from a somewhat altered state of consciousness.

The journal notebook is set up in a particular way which facilitates the recording of the process of one's spiritual history and the current experience of the meditation. There is a section entitled, "Inner Process Entries" in which thoughts and feelings about the process are entered. After each meditation entry, this section is used to record those feelings about the journal writing.

Progoff begins with the meditation guide reading a meditative piece provided by Progoff while the meditator listens receptively. The

²² Ira Progoff, The Practice of Process Meditation (New York: Dialogue House, 1980), p. 82.

participant then records all thoughts and feelings and images which emerge during that reading. Progoff then moves to the category of "Spiritual Positioning." In that section, the journal writer is to answer the question, "How is it with me at the Spiritual Level of my life?" On the next page the journal writer records the thoughts and feelings that came to her or him while writing the answer to the question. The writing should be stream of consciousness. Questions such as... "What are my beliefs?", "What are my doubts?", and "What strong inner experiences have I had?" can be guidelines to this process. After finishing that, the journal writer can go back and include any new ideas in the original positioning statement.

After each of these major sections, the meditator records any thoughts and feelings in the process entry section. The second major step is one called "Gatherings." The purpose of this section is to gather memory fragments of one's interior spiritual history and record them as fragments in the journal. The memory fragments should emerge out of the meditative state without being forced and should be experienced, again, as stream of consciousness.

Again, after this section, another process entry should be made. The next step is called "Spiritual Stepping Stones." In this, the meditator re-reads the memory fragments and develops twelve stages that her or his spiritual life has gone through. These are a distillation of the person's spiritual formation. The stepping stones, again, should emerge out of the twilight state of meditation. After completing this, another process entry is made. If new memory fragments have emerged during this step they can be recorded in the gatherings section.

As before, one is led back into a meditative state by the guide through the reading of a meditation or some other process, and the meditator is to re-read the gatherings and re-experience the feelings. They are to ask themselves questions about their early experiences of disappointment, of joy, or connectedness, of faith, of vision, of loneliness and so on. This section is called "Re-openings." The new memories and feelings that emerge are recorded. Then the meditator re-reads her or his gatherings again looking for themes. As he or she finds a particular thread that runs through the process, this should be recorded and focussed upon. The journal writer should record any feelings, thoughts and images that occur out of this theme of spiritual growth. A process entry is made to record feelings about the experience.

Progoff goes on from here to work with mantra meditation. For the purpose of our work, I followed Progoff's work to this point and then moved towards closure of this experience of getting in touch with spiritual history. Then I developed an exercise to facilitate a way to move into the future.

In order to provide closure for the spiritual history meditation that the women had been experiencing, I asked them to enter a meditative state again through reading them a meditative piece. I then asked the women to select a particular memory from the gathering theme and to re-experience that memory, letting old thoughts and feelings return and letting new insights and images emerge. After they had experienced this, they were instructed to record these feelings, thoughts, and images in the journal. After that they were asked to record any

thoughts and feelings about the experience thus far in the process entry section.

I then led the women in a closing guided meditation which they were to experience. They were then to record their new images and feelings about where this meditation led them. They were asked to find themselves again in a safe, comfortable and relaxed place such as sitting in a meadow. Next to them they were to find the threads which made up their spiritual history and which had been woven into the fabric which makes up their lives. They were to see these threads which had now been untangled and unknotted due to their work in the journal meditation as being ready to be used in ongoing weaving, making up new patterns in their life tapestry. I then asked them to image God as ready to participate with them in the new weaving. They were then to ask themselves if there was anything in the way of their ongoing weaving? They were to investigate who they wanted to participate in the weaving with them. Then, still staying in a quiet, meditative state, they were to remember their process thus far with the spiritual positioning, the stepping stones, the gatherings and the feelings and experiences that were re-opened. They were to recall the threads of their spiritual life that had become clear in these exercises, and they were to see if any new patterns had been woven through the experience itself. Finally, they were to record any new images that emerge as part of the life tapestry.

The journal meditation process used in this adaptation covers approximately three hours of time and it is done in silence except for the guide's directions. When used in its full form, the journal process

is usually done as a two day workshop in and of itself. However, this abbreviated version worked to meet the needs of this program as it interfaced with the other work we had done. In regard to the effectiveness of the journal meditation process, La Ree Naviaux comments,

The intensive journal provides an opportunity to reconstruct a life. It does so in a neutral, open-ended way without imposing any external categories, interpretations, or theories on the person's experience. Through a variety of techniques, the individual is enabled to use inherent resources for becoming a whole person. Inner capacities are systematically evoked and strengthened. New experiences of a creative and spiritual quality may occur in the process of working with the journal.²³

For these reasons, the Intensive Journal Method of spiritual growth appeared to be a useful imagery technique for our closing session.

When we had finished this last meditation, we verbally processed the entire experience. For most women, the experience had been quite powerful. They found that in seeing the whole "tapestry" they were better able to claim their spiritual lives as real and strong. Through the meditation process they were able to feel they had more control over how they "wove" their ongoing spiritual experiences. Almost all of the women felt better equipped to maintain an ongoing and relevant relationship with God.

We completed the twelve hour experience with one last guided imagery, that of the wise woman/God within us. In this, the women were

²³ LaRee D. Naviaux, "The Intensive Journal Process: A Method For Integrating Life's Experiences," Journal of Mental Imagery 4, no.2 (Fall 1980): 84.

led to a place within themselves where they could find the God within themselves who would answer their questions and encourage them in their processes. They were shown the way to this God within so that they could return whenever they needed to.

After a time of group closure (most of the women in the group had developed strong bonds), the group experience was completed and the re-testing through Batson's religious inventory and the final evaluations was carried out. This completed the process.

The results of this study will be detailed in the following chapter. Suffice it to say here that the experience was very meaningful for most of the participants. There were some women, two in particular, who did not feel that it either helped or hindered their spiritual lives and who, while enjoying certain dimensions of the experience, did not feel their understanding or experience of God or themselves had changed. For the other thirteen women, their self-reports indicated important changes in the way they experienced their spirituality and their hopes for their ongoing relationship with God.

CHAPTER 6
The Results of the Study
In Women's Spiritual Growth

Before reporting the results of the group investigation described in the previous chapter it is important to take note of the individuals who took part in the study. As was previously noted, there were fifteen women who became involved in the study. One woman missed one two hour session. The rest were present for the entire twelve hour process. The women ranged in age from seventeen to sixty-two, with the average age being 37.8 years. Of the fifteen women, five were never married, three were divorced or separated, and seven were currently married. Eight were regular church attenders, two attended occasionally, and five did not attend church. Their denominational affiliations, of those attending church and those who continued an identification, were Presbyterian (5), Episcopalian (3), United Methodist (2), Roman Catholic (4), and Baptist (1). Five of the women had advanced degrees (beyond the four years), six had four year degrees, two had some college, and two had high school diplomas. Six were oldest children in their family of origin, with one of those being an only child, three were middle children, and three were youngest children. Twelve of the fifteen women felt they were in significant life transitions at this time. Eight felt they were in spiritual transitions. All of the women were either in a

self-acknowledged life transition or spiritual transition at the time of the study. In terms of their personality types, there were nine extraverts and six introverts. Of the extraverts, eight of them were intuitive and feeling, with the remaining one being a sensing, thinking type. The six introverts were varied, with three being intuitive, feeling types, two being intuitive, thinking types, and the other a sensing, feeling type. Six of the women participated in the weekly group sessions, four in the two Sundays which were one week apart, and five in the weekend overnight retreat. Some of these factors will be explored later in terms of possible relationships with their changes in religious orientation.

The primary measurement focus for this project was, as mentioned in the last chapter, the Religious Life Inventory, developed by C. Daniel Batson. The instrument contains fifty-nine statements with which a person can agree or disagree on a nine-point scale. The questions are designed to explore the a person's religious orientation on six different scales. The scales then combine in specific ways to determine three different dimensions of orientation. The six scales are labeled internal, intrinsic, external, extrinsic, interaction and orthodoxy. The internal scale was designed to measure the degree to which a person's religion is a result of internal needs such as needs for strength, security, and so on. The external scale was designed to measure the degree to which the social environment influences a person's religious approach. The orthodoxy scale is a content scale designed to indicate the level of belief in traditional doctrines. The fourth scale, called the interactional scale, is the one most significant for

this study. It was designed to measure "the basic component of the quest orientation--the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life."¹

The other two scales are those that Allport created, called the intrinsic and extrinsic scales. The intrinsic, in combination with the internal, measures the "ends" orientation (religion as an end in itself). The extrinsic, in combination with the external, measures the "means" orientation (religion as a means to an end). And, the interactional, adjusted by a small amount from the orthodoxy scale, measures the quest orientation. There has been some controversy about whether the quest orientation, basically a process determination, should be affected at all by a scale which is primarily content oriented. When we explore the change in the quest orientation pre- and post-group, we will use the standard scores of the quest orientation and the raw scores from just the interactional scale.

As we discussed in the last chapter, the fact that our religious traditions have been formed from male experience using male models and values, leaves women who are trying to discover their own realities with limited resources. Consequently, it is critical for women to experience a strong quest dimension in their religious orientations because this open-ended, struggling approach will help them to maintain their faith in the divine reality while re-defining the nature of religion out of

1 Batson and Ventis, Religious Experience, pp. 152-54.

their own experience. Consequently, this spiritual growth process for women was designed to enhance the quest orientation in women's religious lives. The Batson measurement, therefore, should indicate an increased score on the quest dimension in the post-group measurement, without a significant increase in either the ends or means dimensions which are measured.

It is important to note that the standard score of this group of women before the spiritual growth group began was .068 on the quest dimension. In other words, these women were less than one-tenth of a standard deviation away from the population mean in their quest orientation to religion. This helps us to know that, for the most part, it was not women who were already high in the quest dimension who sought out this group. They fit the normal population distribution quite well considering the small sample size. It is also important to note that only one of these women had any degree of consciousness-raised prior to this group experience. The rest of the women were very traditional in the way they approached both life and religion. There was no intentional component of consciousness-raising in the group design, itself, but the nature of sharing experiences and validating each other as people, created some consciousness-raising over the twelve hour period. Sexually inclusive language was used by the leader and encouraged for the group use and women's experience formed the core of our work, so the consciousness-raising in terms of valuing women's lives was expected to one degree or another.

Let us begin by looking at the group as a whole. I used a t-test which is designed to use when comparing related groups. As this was a

pre- and post-group measurement, this was the most appropriate choice of statistical measurement. The results of the t-test for the raw scores of the interactional scale was 3.53 which is significant to the .005 level, a highly significant measure. The results of the t-test for the z scores, or standard scores, of the quest measurement was 3.995, again significant to the .005 level. The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between the pre- and post-group scores on either the interactional scale or the quest orientation. As there was a highly significant difference, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of the alternate hypothesis which was that there would be a significant difference in those two scores, pre- and post-group.

The next step was to look at the other dimensions to see how they were affected by the group process. The group starting point on the means orientation was relatively low compared to the population as a whole. It was $-.755$ or about three-quarters of a standard deviation below the mean of the population. This makes sense in that people who use their religion as a means to external gratification (the social benefits of church life, primarily) as their strongest orientation would probably not choose to involve themselves in a study group of this type. The group starting point on the end orientation was only slightly below the population mean at $-.182$. This was a non-significant deviation from the mean.

The t-test done to compare these pre- and post-group measurements was the same statistical test used for the interaction and quest measurement. I used the raw scores of the extrinsic scale for the first test resulting in an absolute t value of 1.71. This was not significant

to even the .05 level of probability. I used the z score (standard score) for the means orientation, of which the the extrinsic scale is a key measurement, and found a t value of .745. This again was not significant to the .05 level. With the intrinsic scale measurement the resulting t value was 1.193 which was not significant at the .05 level. And, with the scores of the end orientation, the t value was .368, again not significant at the .05 level. These measurements clearly indicate that the only significant change in the religious orientation of the group members over the course of the group was in the interaction scale and the quest orientation, and that change was highly significant.

At the individual level, one can look at the changes in percentile rankings of each person, pre- and post-group measured on the quest dimension. The chart on the following page shows those changes. All but two of the participants increased in the quest orientation and both of those two women were in the 80th percentile or above coming into the group.

These measurements, both group and individual, must be viewed with some caution. First, this was a very small sample of women designed to explore what dimensions should be studied in the future. It is dangerous to generalize too much from a small sample. Second, we only have a correlation here rather than a causative relationship. This does not mean that the dynamics of the group did not cause the increase in quest orientation. One might assume that at least some element in the group did cause the changes. But, these figures only indicate that between the first taking of the Batson inventory and the second the women's approach to religion became more heavily quest oriented. The

Individual differences in pre- and post group
percentile rankings on the quest orientation

sub- ject	pre-group z score	pre-group percentile	post-group z score	post-group percentile
1	.497	69.15%	2.754	99.70%
2	- .779	21.77%	- .276	39.36%
3	- 2.480	0.66%	- .410	34.09%
4	- .447	32.64%	1.411	92.07%
5	1.259	89.62%	1.115	87.49%
6	.196	57.93%	.634	73.57%
7	- 1.800	3.59%	- .340	36.69%
8	2.125	98.32%	2.260	99.53%
9	- .884	18.94%	- .074	47.21%
10	.847	80.23%	.733	76.73%
11	1.629	94.84%	1.920	97.26%
12	- .219	41.29%	1.272	89.80%
13	.486	68.79%	1.035	85.08%
14	.833	79.67%	1.071	85.77%
15	- .243	40.52%	.262	60.26%

next step would be to have fewer variables in order to explore what it was in the group process that facilitated the changes. My guess is that it was the combination of shared faith language and experiences, the validation of the women's experiences, and the meditation/imagery techniques that made a difference in the quest orientation. According to reports from the final evaluations, these assumptions are shared by the participants.

Despite these cautions, it is possible to say that the women, as a group, who participated in this experience, had significant changes in the way they looked at their spiritual and religious lives. They, by definition of the measure, became more open-ended, more willing to struggle with their experiential faith questions, and more willing to dialogue between their lives and their beliefs. These are significant gains for women in today's culture who have a tendency to abandon their religion because of their perception of its irrelevancy to their changing lives. And, as a dogmatic belief system derived and interpreted from the male experience of God, it is often irrelevant. Only as a process which is open to receiving and helping to make sense of women's experience can religion be helpful to women who have become aware of their historical oppression in the culture.

Examination of the quest dimension and how it would be affected by this group process was the primary goal of this study. However, the opportunity to look at other relationships was available through the questionnaires and evaluations. One of those relationships was between Jungian Type measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and the percentile change in the quest dimension. The relationships were

measured between people who made highly significant changes pre- and post-group, people who made medium level changes, and people who made low level changes. The women were divided into equal groups of three based on their percentile changes, making five high change, five medium change, and five low change women. The first correlation was between Introvert and Extravert and these change levels. The second was between intuitive/feeling types and the other types including intuitive/thinking, sensing/thinking, and sensing feeling, (taken as a group) and levels of change in quest.

The sample size is too small to do a correlation measurement. The distribution of introverts and extraverts over the three categories of change (high, medium and low) was as would be expected. Approximately one-third of introverts were in each of the change categories and the same was true of the extraverts. However, in the comparison between intuitive feeling types (the group was 73% intuitive/feeling types) it was interesting to see that four of the five low change women were the non-intuitive/feeling types. In other words, all of the women who were not intuitive/feeling types scored low changes in the quest orientation on the pre- and post-group testing. Among the intuitive/feeling types, four out of the eleven scored high changes, five out of the eleven scored medium changes, and one out of the eleven scored low change. The chi-square statistical test used on the entire distribution showed significance at the .1 level and when used on the distribution of just the non-intuitive/feeling types it was significant to the .02 level. Again, because of sample size, the data is only minimally helpful, suggestive at best. However, it would be interesting to explore further

the relationship of the intuitive/feeling functions to spiritual growth through imagery.

In looking at how the people in the different formats compared with one another, it was somewhat surprising to see that the score distribution within each format was fairly even. The only suggestive data was that in the retreat format, four out of the five women had either high or medium level changes with the fifth woman only changing 1.2 percentile points. However, her percentile rankings were from the 98.32 percentile to the 99.53 percentile which in reality moves her to having experienced a significant change in her quest orientation (from high to very high). This may indicate that the intensity of a retreat format improves the likelihood of creative religious experience.

In terms of other possible relationships, there was no relationship between denomination and change in quest orientation. Nor was there a relationship between education and change in quest. There seemed to be a slight relationship between age and change in quest with the 17-25 age group being evenly distributed, the 26-38 age group having three high scores and one low score, the 39-55 age group having three medium scores and one high, and the over 55 age group having three out of three low change scores. The total distribution was not significant with a chi-square test but the patterns may, again, be suggestive. There was no correlation between frequency of church attendance and change in the quest score. In looking at the relationship between preference of imagery (visual, aural, and kinesthetic), the distribution of the visual types (73% of the group) was normal. However, both of the people reporting kinesthetic preference scored high in quest orientation

changes and the two who reported an aural preference scored low. This may indicate that the types of imagery exercises used were more applicable to the visual and kinesthetic types than to the aural types.

The last data to be explored here has to do with the second hypothesis to this study. That was the hypothesis that this spiritual growth process would enhance the participants' imagery for God and would facilitate the participants' ability to form symbolic God imagery. The main way to report data regarding this second hypothesis, which is primarily subjective in nature, is through case vignettes. However, before turning to four case-illustrations which speak to this hypothesis, I will provide some of the applicable self-report data.

In the pre-group individual interview, there were three questions which were directly related to discovering the participant's image/symbol of God and her perceived relationship with God. They were: question 31, "Give me a thumbnail sketch of God"; question 32, "What does it mean to you to be created in the image of God?"; and question 40, "When or where do you feel closest to God?" Two other questions were designed to see if the person engaged in changing her image of God over time. Those questions were: question 33, "Has anyone ever portrayed God in a frightening or frustrating way to you?" and question 34, "Has your view of God stayed pretty much the same throughout your life? Explain." During the group process I observed the women for evidence that they were changing their image of God or if they were finding it difficult to move from a literal and singular image of God to a metaphorical and symbolic understanding of God image. Finally, in the post-group evaluation, there were three questions designed to explore the

participant's experience of God. Those questions were: question 2, "In what way, if any, has this experience changed your understanding of God?"; question 3, "In what way, if any, has this experience changed the way in which you relate to God?"; and question 7, "Describe your understanding of God."

In comparing the pre- and post-group primary God image(s) it is clear that in the majority of participants the image of God went: (1) from a concrete image to a more relational, more dynamic image -- often from a noun to a verb, and (2) from a single faceted image to an image which is compatible with other images. Eleven of the fifteen women went from God as a male, protective, literal figure to God as a being who reaches out to humanity in a multitude of ways (e.g. Jean, pre-group, said, "God is my Father," and post-group said, "God is knowing, loving, forgiving, and available.") The movement from noun to verb was prevalent in the group participants. Twelve of the fifteen women experienced God in a more relational way after the group than before the group. The group participation also indicated that the use of psycho-imagery in exploring a relationship with God enhanced the women's spiritual experiences.

One important relationship explored here is between the change in quest orientation, pre- and post-group, and the change in God image, pre- and post-group. Out of the eleven people who had a significant change in the way in which they began to image God, nine of them also had high positive levels of change in level of quest orientation. Of the four whose God image did not change (three of which already had more dynamic God images to start with), two of them had low levels, one had

As was stated earlier, this data is subjective and results from the women's self-reports in a variety of forms. Consequently, because of this and because of the small number of participants, the information is clearly suggestive rather than determinative. However, it does suggest that, first, there was a strong relationship between the change in quest and the change in forming God images. Second, the data indicates that the program helped these women to change the way in which they experienced and understood God.

I have maintained contact with eleven of the fifteen women beyond the end of the group. Several have experienced powerful changes in their lives which they attribute to their experiences in the group. In concluding the report of the results of this study, I will give one extended case study and several other briefer examples which illustrate the kinds of changes that took place.

Elsie decided she wanted to be in the spiritual growth group because she felt she was always searching for something that was just beyond her reach. She'd had an unhappy childhood, with a younger brother dying of leukemia when she was 10 and many moves around the world because of her father's work. Shortly after her brother's death her parents got divorced and she lived a hand-to-mouth existence with her mother. She did not openly grieve about her brother or the divorce, learning strict rules of behavior which included; never show your feelings, always be polite, and never do anything which might hurt someone. These rules became Elsie's religion and she learned to cut herself off from her authentic feelings so well that they became unavailable to her.

Elsie wanted one thing in life and that was to have a family. She married the first man who asked her despite the fact that he was narcissistic and somewhat abusive. They had two children and she masked her feelings of unhappiness in the marriage by devoting herself to the children. About six years before the group, Elsie met a man to whom she felt very attracted. They engaged in a brief affair but the man had unresolved sexual identity issues and broke off the relationship. This time Elsie did grieve but, with her rule system, she couldn't be open about it. She became depressed without any access to her emotional resources.

Elsie decided to get involved in individual therapy. She went at least weekly for six years. Her husband threatened her repeatedly because he did not want her to be in therapy but she felt she could not do without it, even though it really didn't seem to provide long-term help. When she moved to a suburb, she changed therapists, and went for a weekly "fix" for her feelings. She did not benefit from therapy in any real way. She became involved in a women's support group which was more helpful and she made some progress in self-understanding through the bonding she did there.

Elsie had a recurring dream which was of a baby crying without sound. When she went to hold the baby for comfort, it would either disappear or it would cry even more fiercely, still without sound. She identified the baby with the male she had been in love with and wanted to care for. She was unable to see it in terms of personal neediness.

Elsie took part in the two Sunday group experiences. She was an active member, although was cautious about revealing too much of

herself. On the second day, she was much more vulnerable and open than she had been the first day. During the last two hours, which was the process meditation exercise done in silence, Elsie cried silently throughout most of her writing. At the end of the day, as we processed our experiences, Elsie told of a powerful image she'd had. She had seen a baby crying without sound again and, as she reached for it, God came into the scene in the form of a nurturing mother. God picked up the baby and she cried with noise and tears. It was at that moment that Elsie experienced herself as the baby and felt held by God. We listened and supported her as she shared these deep feelings which were mixed between grief and joy. She felt profoundly moved.

Elsie returned to therapy for only a few more sessions. She called me about a month later to tell me again about the power of the image and how she did not feel the need to be in therapy any more. She continued in the support group however. She also took steps in her personal life (getting a restraining order for her husband, being assertive with him about her needs, etc.) Her life continues to be affected by the image of God and herself which she had during the group experience.

While this is probably the clearest and most powerful experience of the group members it is not atypical in its essence. Another woman came into the group feeling uncertain about her live-in relationship and his power over her emotions. During the Brooke's meditation, she experienced recurring images of rape and of God's intervention into the attack. Again, God was female. As she processed this she felt that it was a powerful image of what she was experiencing with her boyfriend but had been afraid to admit. She called me several weeks after the group

experience to let me know that she had left her boyfriend and was moving through the insecurity and grief in constructive ways. I referred her to a therapist to do ongoing work on her issues. She also reported that she had returned to weekly worship after not having gone for several years.

A third woman came into the group because she felt she had a close relationship with God but she tended to feel guilty a lot and didn't know why. During the work with childhood memories she was able to get in touch with some unhappy memories and through the imagery work which included images of God, diminish their power over her. She had engaged in certain sexual activities in college about which she felt very badly. At this point in time she did not relate romantically to anyone. She began counseling, after the completion of the group, and was able to talk about her perception of God's laws for her life. Using some of the new imagery abilities she had developed, she was able to come to better terms with her sexual identity.

Finally, Janice joined the group because she was excited about the spiritual growth she had done over the past few months and wanted to continue. She had difficulty, though, relating her faith to the problems she was having with her family. She tended to use her spiritual life as an escape from the family difficulties. She became very excited when we did the directed imagery trying the various images for God. She felt that the access she had to God through the different images made God more relevant and integrative for her. After the completion of the group, she called to tell me how meaningful it had been to her. She called again several weeks later to tell me that she

had begun to talk to her husband and son about what she had experienced in the group and her husband, at least, was beginning to talk about his own spirituality. They were in their middle years and to find a new area of common concern worked powerfully to deepen their relationship. She also felt that she had more energy available to deal with the crises in the family and she didn't need to escape so often.

These are just a few of the experiences of the women who participated in the spiritual growth group. There were, of course, others who did not find the experience particularly meaningful. There was a woman who said, weekly, that she just couldn't get into the experience. (She scored a negative change in her quest orientation as well). Another woman remarked on her evaluation form that the most meaningful part of the group experience (and really the only meaningful part of it) was meeting me. (She also had a low change in her quest orientation). On the whole, though, the women had significant experiences through this process. The Batson inventory results confirm what, in many ways, was obvious to the people who participated in the group.

Chapter 7

Conclusions, Implications and Areas for Further Research

This project sets worship as a primary context for pastoral counseling. The search for self-knowledge and understanding and the search for knowledge of God become joined in an open, meditative process so that each informs the other. God is invited to participate in that process in such a way that worship takes place. God is found in the relationships between counselor and client, and between group members, and God is found through the new and relevant images generated within those relationships. The images serve as vehicles for the connection between the person and the divine power which is God. It is the acknowledged, interactive presence of God which helps to avoid both the idolatry of a fixed God and the idolatry of experience. In this meditative experience, with the group and trained pastoral counselor representing the community through which images for God are tested, the process of relating experience and tradition in the generation of new God imagery facilitates stronger and more relevant faith.

What does it mean if one claims that pastoral counseling is set in a context of worship? It means that God's presence and power are acknowledged in both overt and covert ways as the client, with the counselor, seeks to enrich and understand her or his personal and

communal life in meaningful ways. It means that psychology and theology are integrated in pastoral counseling at the level of relationship between counselor, client, and God. It means that relevant images for God and for self are generated in an attitude of receptivity to God's participation.

This understanding of pastoral counseling in the context of worship is a primary conclusion and a primary starting place for this project. It is central to the implications of this work for the field of pastoral counseling. The generation of new images as vehicles to the Divine Power, which is beyond all images, must take place in the acknowledged presence of that Power. It is there that the experience and resources of the individual join with the activity of God to inspire spiritual growth. And, the presence of the pastoral counselor and the group of seekers, provides a necessary corrective to equating experience with the "name" of God as they, together, represent the Church community.

With this in mind, what else can we conclude from this investigation? The most obvious conclusion is that it is possible to impact women's religious orientation resulting in a greater flexibility and openness to experiencing God through the questions in life rather than just the answers. Since thirteen of the fifteen women had an increased level of the quest dimension in their religious orientations after the group as compared to before, it is clear that some factor or set of factors in the group experience facilitated their questing orientation. The very nature of the group experience is, of course, primarily questing/searching so that it at least models that approach. However, it appears that the orientation becomes internalized and the

quest for God become integrated with the quest for self-knowledge. This was the intent in the development of the material and it appears to have been effective according to the self-reports of the participants. Regardless of which element or elements in the process are primarily responsible for the change, the central conclusion is that change does occur. And, it was a foundational assumption of this project, developed fully in chapter two, that it is necessary for this change to occur in order for women to experience a relevant connection with God and with their personal and societal religious histories.

The fact that only one of the women had a raised-consciousness about women's theological and psychological issues at the start of the group raises another question. What if women are perfectly happy with their traditional religious approach and their reliance on a God who is a father? There are three strands in the answer to this question. The first relates, again, to the issue of idolatry. In Genesis, God refuses to be named, referring the people to the divine verb of Yahweh. The writers of the Scriptures lift up a myriad of images in referring to the divine presence and activity, always aware that to capture God in a single word/image would be to lose God. It is only in our age of scientific positivism that we have felt the need to reduce God to a "truth"--trying to speak literally of that which can only be suggested through symbols, metaphors, and analogies. No matter what one's orientation or philosophical stance, the call to eliminate idolatry is central to our pastoral task. This places the development of a stronger quest orientation, which by definition searches rather than fixates, in line with the tradition of prophetic ministry.

The second strand of this answer relates to the quest element of religion. As Batson points out in Religious Experience and in several articles, the quest orientation is not a type that must exist in place of other types. Quest is one dimension of a person's orientation to religion. It does not replace anything. As was indicated by the statistics from this study, the quest dimension can be enhanced while the other dimensions remain the same, become stronger, or decline in strength. The three dimensions of quest, means, and end do not operate in typological fashion. All three form the base for how a person experiences and forms her or his religious life. They increase or decrease independently.

The third issue involves the fact that this study does arise out of a feminist perspective. The belief that women have been ignored and/or denigrated through an almost exclusively male-oriented theology undergirds the creation of this project. However, there was no attempt to persuade or even introduce feminist philosophical principles. The process emerged out of that philosophy and acted on it through taking women's experience seriously, as spiritual development and theological reflection occurred, and making that experience foundational to the ongoing process. But, these principles were not taught or made a condition for belonging to the group. Women's experiences were taken seriously and respected whether they were traditional, tentatively questioning or radical. And the women were comfortable with their differences. Consequently, even though the study emerged out of feminist theology/psychology/philosophy, which is not a neutral position, the process of the group was one of respecting people as

they were and teaching them to respect and validate themselves. In keeping with feminist theology, nothing was taken away from these women. What they had was supplemented instead.

Another conclusion to be drawn is that the women found greater satisfaction with their spiritual lives after the group process than they had before the group. According to the initial interviews, most of the women did not actively reflect upon or live out of their religious convictions. In the interviews, even the women who attended church regularly tended to talk about their religious lives as an addendum to their real lives. Their responses to questions about their religious lives included answers like, "I like to go to church because it gives me a break from the rest of the week," or "I don't know the answer to that; I haven't really thought about God in years," or "I suppose God is always there listening and watching but God doesn't always hear me or look at me." These responses were fairly typical of the pre-group answers to the question of "does religion help you?" These same people responded to that question afterwards with answers that included, "I feel that God can now be a part of my life and my conflicts. God is no longer someone I bounce thoughts off of but is there participating with me." This was from the woman who thought God didn't often see her or hear her. From the person who hadn't thought of God in years, the response was, "Somehow this experience has shown me that God really exists. In learning more about myself I have learned that I am not alone--God is really with me." And from the person who said that church gives her a break from the rest of the week, "I feel that I have found a personal relationship with God that I didn't have. God really talked to

me and is really a part of my life. I don't know that my understanding of God has changed--just my relationship with God." These reports indicate a change in the level of satisfaction. All three of these people have maintained this change. The one who had not thought about God in years has an active prayer life now which has been a great help to her through some critical times in the last few months. The one who has learned that God is a part of her life rather than not looking or listening to her has had significant conflicts with parents that she had been ignoring previously and is now confronting directly. She feels that her images of God and her experience of God are helping maintain her through those conflicts. The one who went to church for a weekly break from life felt directed during the imagery to re-open her grief about a death in her family which happened some time ago. She has gone to her church pastor to work with that, feeling that the church is relevant now to her entire life. These are important changes in the lives of these women which reflect a satisfaction in their religious lives that was not there prior to the group experience.

To state this as an additional conclusion from the study, the spiritual growth that these women experienced affects the rest of their life and their life experiences, in return, now reflect back into their faith formulations. This dialogue is the key to maintaining a relevant, active, faithful spirituality.

A third conclusion to this study involves the relationship between the quest dimension and changing, more dynamic, images for God. There can be no conclusive relationship drawn between these two. However, it was indicated, by the data, that those people who had a greater change

in the way they understood God also experienced greater positive change in their quest scores. No causative relationship has been established, but we can conclude that change in God image and change in quest orientation went hand in hand in this study. It appeared to me, subjectively, that those women who were willing to be open to experiencing God through new images were also willing to explore other dimensions of their religion. This is what the quest category measures.

Another conclusion from this study has to do with the power of the symbol, itself. Time and time again, women would experience a symbol which connected them to such a profound reality that they could not look away. It was frequently through experiencing a powerful symbol during the guided imagery or meditation that motivation to reflect on faith and life experiences emerged. This realization can work both ways. It can work in the way we have used it in this study, that the power of the symbol can guide one to richer and fuller spiritual life if the symbol emerges out of personal experience and participates in the divine reality. It can also work in reverse. In other words, when a symbol is used that does not tap into life experience in any way, then it can work powerfully to alienate. This is particularly true if a symbol which does not reflect the life experience of a group of people becomes institutionalized. We must remember the power of symbols in the spiritual realm particularly if we wish to help people to remain connected to the religious traditions in any meaningful way.

The process of spiritual symbol-making through creative imagery technique, which is what this study is all about, does more than just provide new options for women's spiritual and religious expression.

Certainly it does that as new options for ways to live religiously are created when people become willing to search for new questions and new answers. The fact that this happens was clearly reflected in the Batson measurement. But this symbol-making also creates a new reality. The phrase, "it's all in your head," has always been used to invalidate someone's reality. It means that whatever was being experienced only existed internally and therefore not in the real world. However, it is clear that in this "head" process of symbol-making in imagery exercises, a new reality is generated and this reality is as "real" as any other. The image becomes a part of the whole person and, consequently, a part of the whole life. It is not just like going to a theatre for an experience and then leaving there with the intention of going back sometime. After experiencing a new symbol of God and self through imagery, the person now sees and experiences life through the lenses provided by that image. Behavior, thought, feeling, intentions, and so on become shaped by that image and they, in turn, feedback to the image to monitor its ongoing relevance for life. The image is more than an insight. It joins with the whole person in her or his whole context. To use Ahkter Ahsen's model, it has a sensory component, a feeling/body component, and a meaning component. And, the three of these combine with all prior images and their realities to create a new reality.

One final conclusion, which has implications for the field of pastoral counseling, has to do with the process elicited by this program. The model set forth here is one which does not assume that the counselor must impose anything onto the client. There was no expectation that the women involved needed to get angry in order to

facilitate their wholeness, nor did they have to be confronted with the bare facts of their oppression in a sexist society. Instead, it was assumed that when women were encouraged to believe in and trust their own experience, and to hear the experiences of other women, they became more whole and more open to exploring the very vulnerable area of their faith. They then, in a natural growth process, became more aware that they had not previously been open to the full potential for their lives. This did require, however, the presence of a group leader who was clear about the importance of women's experience in fighting pervasive sexism. However, consciousness-raising was done in natural and non-impositional ways, from within the client's own process. This is an important model for pastoral counselors of both sexes.

Not just the process, but the power of imagery and the specific results of the use of imagery in this study, as well, has important implications for the field of pastoral counseling. First of all, the techniques of psycho-imagination therapy hold considerable promise for those of us engaged in pastoral counseling. The practice of pastoral counseling is intended to be integrative, bringing together, in operatively helpful ways, elements of theology, psychology, spirituality, and psychotherapy. The struggle in both pastoral counseling theory and practice has been to find the means through which this integration can occur in the most helpful and balanced ways. Theoretical issues, such as the boundaries between these various fields, and which of them should hold primacy in pastoral counseling, have been debated. Clinical issues such as how to be open and encouraging to spiritual needs while not imposing religious points of view, and working

with value issues in non-judgmental ways, have also been actively considered. These issues, both theoretical and clinical, do not have cut and dried answers, nor should they. And, I do not mean to suggest that psycho-imagination work is the approach all pastoral counseling should take. I do believe, however, that psycho-imagination work helpfully speaks to the integrative concerns so clear in the development of pastoral counseling.

As developed in chapter four, the image is an integrative apparatus of the human psyche, bringing together thought, feeling, and meaning as well as integrating history with novelty. In its integrative ability, it is a very appropriate technique to use in pastoral counseling. This is especially true in helping to elicit a person's spiritual resources as she or he faces a time of life crisis. In life crisis situations, spiritual resources are often unavailable to people because their image(s) of God and of the relationship between God and the self are no longer relevant to her or his life context. The person's other symbolic life images seem to be able to change more easily with new life experiences. However, because of theology's tendency to literalize God imagery, it seems as though the symbolic God image(s) become relatively fixed in childhood (before abstract thinking is possible) and do not develop, even with contradictory life experiences.

Using psycho-imagery techniques, a person can become more clear about the images that are currently functioning and can then use those in the formation of new images. It is a valuable tool for enhancing spiritual growth.

A second implication for pastoral counseling comes from the study

itself. The use of psycho-imagination work, in general, and the use of the program reported here specifically, demonstrates that enhancing God imagery in a worshipful or meditative context surfaces spiritual resources. I have shown that this particular program, with its progression from leader-directed to self-directed imagery, through a format designed to enhance spiritual experience, helps women to become more willing to challenge their spiritual convictions and, consequently, experience spiritual growth. This means that pastoral counselors can enhance the spiritual resources of their clients/parishoners through the methods detailed in chapter five. This method provides a balanced approach to working with spiritual issues in clients. It sets the stage by guiding the client towards issues to be addressed and yet the client writes the script and fills the stage out of her or his imagination. This is done in simple, exploratory ways initially, but can gain in intensity throughout the counseling process. The fact that nothing is imposed on the client and nothing is taken away is an important consideration for pastoral counseling. This provides a route to spiritual growth, at both the individual and group level, where a client's own resources effectively lead to spiritual growth.

The fact that this study took place in a group setting shows that group interaction can be helpful in working with spiritual issues. Effective use of resources must always be a consideration, particularly in pastoral counseling in a specialized setting. Group counseling conserves time and money in the counseling process. It also seemed to be a supportive resource during the project and a source of inspiration to the group members. Pastoral counseling is often done in a one to one

setting, between counselor and client. The feedback from this project would support much feminist research suggesting that the group is a particularly helpful way to work with women. Working in a group format allowed the spiritual experiences to be placed in life contexts and, thereby, enhanced the relevancy of the spiritual growth. Sharing both those life contexts and the spiritual experiences between group members, I believe, helped the integration of life and faith through these imagery experiences.

In summary, then, it appears that the use of imagery psychology clearly has resources for pastoral counseling and spiritual growth. Since images are wholistic and powerful in their integrative ability, their use is particularly appropriate for spiritual development. Imagery stimulation creates a process within which a person's own content can take form. In other words, when one uses imagery suggestion in talking about God, the internal context is set with the divine presence, and the access to that presence comes through personal content. That content is formed by the individual's personal experiences, personal religious history, needs and concerns, experience in the society, and the religious traditions which have been a part of that person's life. It is also formed by God's presence and activity which has been invited into the image in such a way that the person doing the imagery is receptive to it. And she or he is receptive because a God image is not being imposed with a pre-existing form and content, but is offered in such a way that it is relevant to the particular person without losing its grounding in the context of the whole. This is very important as we look at the fact that women (and

men) are leaving the churches because they are not finding the power of God's presence through the vehicles which the churches are providing.

This leads us into implications of this study for the local church. It seems to me that the churches need new ways to help people experience God's power and presence in their own lives and in the world. But the churches, at least the mainline protestant churches, seem to have trouble reaching people with the message of God's powerful activity so that it can make a difference to their lives and their world. I think that the churches have difficulty in helping people see what the traditions of their religions have to say to the world today in ways that are powerful enough to re-orient their lives around their faith. Over and over, the women talked about the church as "hypocritical" or as "preaching God's care and love but when my life fell apart I had nothing from the church to help put it back together," or "the church gives me a break during the week where I can put the problems in my life aside," or "The only reason I go to church is that it gives me a place to sing." The problems in one's life and in the life of the world should be able to be present in the life of the church in such a way that it shapes the church's experience. But pre-formed images, through a rigid interpretation of the traditions, do not make easy access to lives in a world that is rapidly changing and in great crisis. The imagery process that seems to have formed the core of our Christian tradition has been lost as it became content instead of process. The process must be regained so that it may take on the form of our personal and communal needs and hopes.

I am not suggesting that all teaching and preaching and care in the

church be in the form of imagery enhancement. People need content as well: content which provides the grounding in our religious traditions and in the experiences of all those who have tried to make sense of God and the world from the beginning of time. But the content of our traditions needs to be joined with the content of contemporary experience, personal and social, in a process that takes both tradition and ongoing experience seriously and respects differences without judgment. And, since the history of our religions have been formed out of male experience, we must listen especially carefully to the experience of women as a new tradition is in formation (as it always is).

In looking at the implications for the local church, one must explore the ramifications of this study on many dimensions of parish life. First of all, it is clear that the training for ministers, who have a powerful impact on the image life of the congregation, must include work on the problem of idolatrous and irrelevant images for women and men alike. In addition, they must be sensitive to the double impact of patriarchal imagery and its resulting institutions on women, in particular, in the church. Since the minister is so influential in the spiritual lives of the congregation, she or he must be able to address the long-standing patriarchal oppression in which the church has participated over its history. This should be considered a basic component of clergy education for either parish or specialized ministry.

The practical issues within the life and worship of the congregation must also be addressed. This study has demonstrated that imagination training and guidance is effective with individuals and

small groups in enhancing spiritual growth in wholistic, non-oppressive ways. One can, I believe, generalize this conclusion to working with large groups such as church congregations. Within the congregational life, liturgy is a form of directed imagination. In other words, the language of liturgy is highly imaginative. One could assume that if the congregation were helped in learning how to pay attention to their image lives, the liturgy of worship could be a very effective way to enhance the spiritual resources of the congregation. A minister sensitive to the theological issues of idolatrous god imagery and the patriarchal nature of predominant God imagery, could be very helpful to the congregation's spiritual growth. In addition, it is clear that pastoral care could be especially powerful if it focussed, at least in part, on helping people to tap into and energize their deepest imagery. The same points hold true in the preaching and teaching functions of ministry. In all aspects of church life, while helping people of the church to understand their religious histories and to create new religious paradigms, intentional use of symbolic imagery, which is liberating and which enhances personal and communal spirituality, must be used. Our task is to be a liberating and faithful people. It seems to me that this kind of imagery work aids us in that task.

This suggestive list for ways imagery is appropriate in the life of the church is only a starting place. I believe that this study suggests that women, at least, as disenfranchised members of the religious tradition, benefit spiritually from connecting with their own images and with the traditional images in dialogue. This work, done in the congregation, could, I believe, help people to feel that they are taken

seriously and that they do fit into the ongoing religious tradition-making of the church.

In terms of the applicability of this particular program to the life of the church, I feel that it could be very appropriately used as an ongoing group in spiritual development for both men and women. The process of self knowledge and God knowledge integrated into new images and symbols is central to the mission of the church. This study, which works integratively with both kinds of knowledge, could make an important contribution to the life of the local church.

Although the benefit of this kind of group work seems clear, future research should be carried out to refine the process. There are several types of investigation which could be helpful in making decisions about this refinement process. First of all, there should be a larger number of groups within which this study is repeated so that statistically significant data can be collected. Second, use of a longitudinal component would be helpful to determine long-term effects of this kind of process and to determine whether and what kind of follow up should be used to maintain good imagery abilities. Third, it might be helpful to try a single method of imagery to see whether it is the general learning to image around spiritual issues which is helpful or whether it is the different imagery techniques in an intensity-building process which is most helpful. This study operated on the assumption that the process of combining these various techniques in a particular way to facilitate creativity was important to its success. This should be explored. A fourth research possibility would be to operate two groups, one which worked primarily within a verbal mode (lecture,

discussion, and so on) and one that worked primarily with imagery exercises. It may be misleading to call one group an imagery only experience because there is a great deal of verbal processing along with the imagery. The Batson measurement could still be used to determine whether an exclusively verbal approach can also enhance a questing orientation to religion. And, finally, I would guess that the personality of the group leader has a significant impact on the group process. This could be explored by keeping other factors constant in several groups but having different group facilitators in each. Comparative measurements and self-reports could suggest how this impacts the group success.

This study just scratches the surface of possibilities in the field of women's spiritual development. As methods are developed to facilitate women's spiritual experience we will find new options for enhancing the spirituality of both men and women. Imagery, in its integrative, symbol-making richness, provides one of many doorways to join knowledge of God and knowledge of self into new possibilities for all of creation.

APPENDIX A

Initial Interview Questions

1. Age?
2. Education?
3. Employment?
4. Employment goal or ideal?
5. Marital Status?
6. Race/Ethnic origin?
7. Size of town - growing up?
8. Size of town - current?
9. Give a thumbnail sketch of your: a)mother, b)father, c)siblings.
10. Give a thumbnail sketch of yourself.
11. Did your parents attend church when you were young?
12. Did your parents seem religious to you when you were young?
13. Did you attend church or church school when you were young?
14. Were you baptized? Confirmed?
15. If your family didn't go to church, did they have ways of living out their spiritual needs?
16. What was the lifestyle of your family when you were growing up? What "script" did they live out?
17. What is the "script" like in your current family?

18. Was your neighborhood primarily of one religious orientation?
19. Were your friends primarily of one religious orientation?
20. When did you begin to form your own religious opinions or raise questions about your religious training?
21. Have you had what you might consider "religious experiences" as an adolescent or at any time?
22. Do you attend church now?
23. In what ways does the church meet and/or not meet your needs?
24. Is there anyone in your family who objects to your religious stance at this point in your life?
25. Is your family "religious" now?
26. Do you have a favorite heroine or hero from the Scriptures or from religious stories?
27. Who influenced you the most in terms of your spiritual development?
28. What is your current denomination or religious preference?
29. Why?
30. Are you a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic type person?
[Terms were explained.]
31. Give me a thumbnail sketch of God.
32. What does it mean to you to be created in the image of God?
33. Has anyone ever portrayed God in a frightening or frustrating way to you? How?

34. Has your view of God stayed pretty much the same throughout your life? Explain.
35. What does it mean to be religious?
36. What does it mean to have a religious experience?
37. What would you say gives one "meaning" in life?
38. What does the word "conversion" mean?
39. How do you deal with guilt?
40. When or where do you feel closest to God?
41. What is your "spiritual side" like?
42. What do you need to help your spirituality develop further?
43. Would you consider yourself to be in religious transition at this point in time?
44. Would you consider yourself to be in a life transition at this point in time?
45. Why do you want to participate in this group?

APPENDIX B

Batson's Religious Life Inventory

Circle the response which most nearly reflects your agreement or disagreement with the statement. 1=strongly disagree and 9=strongly agree

1. The church has been very important to my religious development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. Worldly events cannot effect the eternal truths of my religion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. My religious development is a natural response to the innate need of the human for devotion to God.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. It is important for me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

6. It might be said that I value my religious doubts and uncertainties.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

7. It doesn't matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

8. My minister (or youth director, camp counselor, etc) has had a profound influence on my personal religious development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. If not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, I attend church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10. God's will should shape my life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

11. The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. On religious issues I find the opinion of others irrelevant.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

13. I try hard to carry over my religion into all my other dealings in life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

14. It is necessary for me to have a religious belief.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

15. The church is most important as a place to formulate good social relationships.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

16. When it comes to a religious question, I feel driven to know the truth.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

17. The prayers I say when I am alone carry as much meaning and personal emotion as those said by me during services.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

18. I find that my everyday experiences severely test my religious convictions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

19. What religion offers me most is comfort when sorrows and misfortune strike.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

20. A major factor in my religious development has been the importance of religion for my parents.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

21. Quite often I have been keenly aware of the presence of God or the Divine Being.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

22. I do not expect my religious convictions to change in the next few years.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

23. I pray chiefly because I have been taught to pray.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

24. Religion is something I have never felt personally compelled to consider.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

25. I read literature about my faith or church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

26. I have been driven to ask religious questions out of a growing awareness of the tensions in my world and in my relation to my world.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

27. Although I am a religious persons, I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

28. I believe in original sin.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

29. My religion serves to satisfy needs for fellowship and security.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

30. If I were to join a church group I would prefer to join a Bible study group rather than a social fellowship.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

31. My religious development has emerged out of my growing sense of personal identity.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

32. I believe in life after death.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

33. A primary reason for my interest in religion is that my church is a congenial social activity.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

34. My religion is a personal matter, independent of the influence of organized religion.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

35. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

36. I believe there is a transcendent realm (an other world, not just this world in which we live.).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

37. Occasionally I find it necessary to compromise my religious beliefs in order to protect my social and economic well-being.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

38. Whether I turn out to be religious or not doesn't make much difference to me.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

39. Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

40. I believe the Bible is the unique authority for God's will.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

41. Certain people have served as "models" for my religious development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

42. One reason for my being a church member is that such membership helps to establish a person in the community.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

43. I have found it essential to have faith.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

44. It is important for me to learn about religion from those that know more about it than I do.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

45. God wasn't very important to me until I began to ask questions about the meaning of my own life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

46. I believe one must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to be saved from sin.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

47. The purpose of prayer is to secure a happy and peaceful life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

48. I find it impossible to conceive of myself not being religious.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

49. I believe in the existence of a just and merciful God.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

50. I believe in the second coming (that Jesus Christ will one day return to judge and rule the world).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

51. The "me" of a few years back would be surprised at my present religious stance.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

52. I believe God created the universe.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

53. Questions are far more central to my religious experience than are answers.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

54. I believe God has a plan for the universe.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

55. I believe Jesus Christ is the Divine Son of God.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

56. Outside forces (other persons, church, etc.) have been relatively unimportant in my religious development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

57. I believe Jesus Christ was resurrected (raised from the dead).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

58. For me, religion has not been a "must."

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

59. I believe Jesus Christ is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

APPENDIX C

Final Evaluation Form

1. In what way, if any, has this experience changed your understanding of yourself?

2. In what way, if any, has this experience changed your understanding of God?

3. In what way, if any, has this experience changed the way in which you relate to God?

4. What was the most valuable part of this experience for you?

5. What was the least valuable part of this experience for you?

6. What about this experience will be a continuing resource for you?

7. Describe your understanding of God?
8. What does it or will it mean for you to be religious from this point on in your life?
9. How do you plan to continue to grow spiritually?
10. Other Comments:

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